

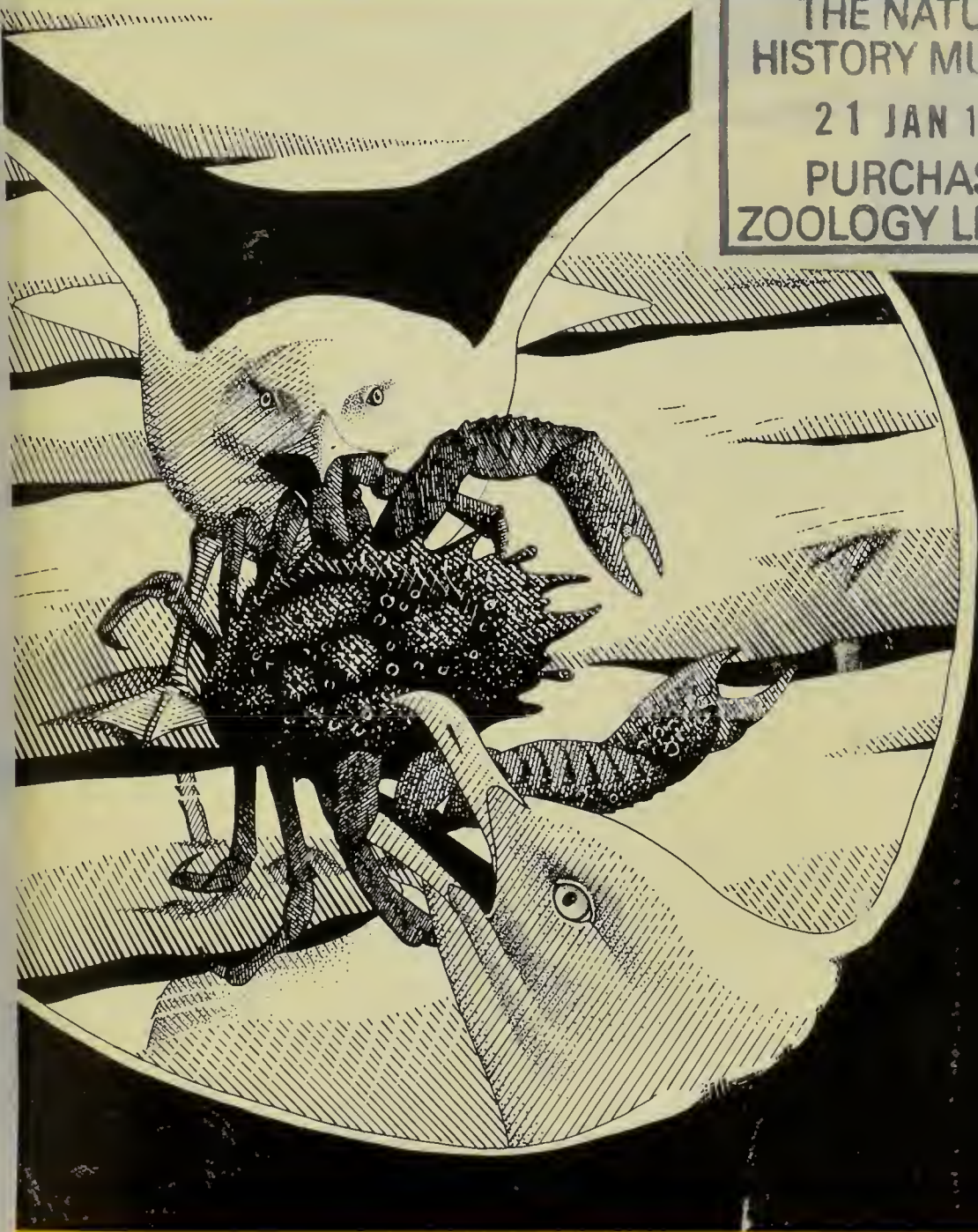
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British Birds

Volume 87 Number 1 January 1994

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European news

A golden plover: but which one?

Pollutants in Great Bitterns

The new Breeding Bird Survey

Red-flanked Bluetails

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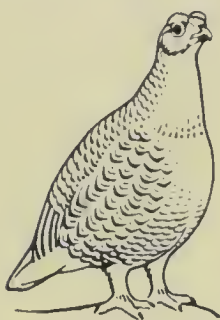
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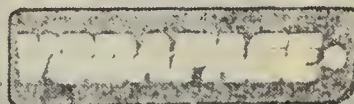
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European news

This regular six-monthly feature summarises information for the whole of Europe (and some adjacent parts of the Western Palearctic).

Details of all recent records have been supplied by the official national correspondents (see list at end of this report), and relevant published records have also been extracted for earlier years from the major national journals.

These summaries aim to include *all* records of: (1) significant breeding-range expansions or contractions; (2) major irruptions of erupting species; (3) Asiatic vagrants; (4) Nearctic species (excluding ducks, waders and gulls in Great Britain and Ireland, where they are regular); (5) other extralimital vagrants; and (6) major national rarities, even if common elsewhere in Europe.

This thirty-fourth biannual report includes records from 39 countries.

The delegates of European rarities committees, meeting on Heligoland, Germany, during 2nd-9th October 1993, discussed the practicability and potential value of producing an annual 'European Bird Report', but concluded that this six-monthly 'European news' feature already performed all the functions required. The meeting, therefore, adopted 'European news' in *British Birds* as the official vehicle for publication of compilations of news of accepted (or about-to-be-accepted) major rarity records from each country. We are delighted to be able to provide this service on behalf of the newly formed Association of European Rarities Committees, as part of our role as a non-profit-making journal published 'for the benefit of ornithology'.

The official 'European news' correspondents will continue to receive complimentary subscriptions to *British Birds* in recognition of their services. From now on, we shall also be supplying a free copy of each issue containing 'European news' to each European rarities committee.

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to single individuals

Records still awaiting formal ratification by the relevant national rarities committee are indicated by an asterisk *

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* MOROCCO Fifth record: between Cap Rhir and Tamri on 30th March 1993.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* MOROCCO Largest-ever winter concentration: at least 800 on Barrage Idriss I^{er}, near Fès, on 24th January 1993.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* ICELAND Decrease: about 40% decrease in breeding numbers at Mývatn between 1973 and 1990; has disappeared in many other areas in last 40 years: about 250 pairs breeding in 1990. ISRAEL Second or third record: south of Tel Aviv from end of May to mid June 1993. UKRAINE Second record in western Ukraine: eight in Javoriv district, Lviv Region, on 28th July 1993.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophrys* ICELAND Third record: 7th July 1990 (*Bliki* 13: 18).

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* BELGIUM Influx: 11 during August-December 1990 (eight previous records; *Oriolus* 59: 32).

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas* ISRAEL Second record for the Western Palearctic: overwintering May to August 1993 at Eilat (first record in August 1992, *Brit. Birds* 86: 36-37).

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* POLAND First record: 1st April 1990 (*Notatki Om.* 33: 112).

Mediterranean Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* BELGIUM Influx: live during August-September 1990 (ten previous records; *Oriolus* 59: 32). GERMANY First and second records: Heligoland on 12th August 1992 and 13th August 1992 (*Om. Jahresbericht Helgoland* 3: 63-68).

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* BELGIUM First and second records: 19th September 1990 and 25th September 1990 (*Oriolus* 59: 32-33; the 1988 report noted *Brit. Birds* 82: 321 was withdrawn by the observer).

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* PORTUGAL Passage: Cape St Vincent, Sagres, Algarve. 12,100 moving south from 1st November to 12th December 1992, and 12,000 moving north from 4th January to 31st March 1993.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* BELARUS Breeding expansion, second to fourth known colonies: about ten pairs at Lake Snudy, Braslav district, Vitebsk region, in June 1992, about 100 pairs at Selets Reservoir, Berioza district, Brest region, in May 1993, and about 100 pairs near Khvoensk, Zhitkovichi district, Gomel region, in May 1993. CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 500-660 pairs in 1985-89 (rapid increase since 1983). LATVIA Continued increase: up to 150 breeding pairs on Lake Lubāna in 1993 (about 60 pairs in 1992) and feeding flocks of up to 200 individuals regularly visiting neighbouring fish-ponds. SWEDEN Massive increase: from 6,750 pairs in 20 colonies in 1991 to 9,500 pairs in 40 colonies in 1992, despite large-scale illegal persecution from fishing interests. (Cf. recent increases in Austria, Denmark, Estonia, France, Italy, Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the Ukraine, *Brit. Birds* 84: 227; 85: 414; 86: 37.)

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* GREAT BRITAIN First record: Cleveland on 11th January to 21st April 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 453-454).

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* FINLAND Third record: second-year in Porvoo, at Kummelskär, on 23rd May 1992.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* POLAND First record this century: adult at Jeziorsko Reservoir, central Poland, on 7th June 1992 (at least six records in nineteenth century).

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* SPAIN First record: adult on 22nd May to 4th June 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 71).

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* POLAND First and second records: 25th August 1990 and 11th-16th October 1990 (*Notatki Om.* 33: 112).

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* POLAND First record: 1st December 1990 (*Notatki Om.* 33: 113).

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 20-30 pairs in 1985-89. SWEDEN Second-highest total this century: 370 booming males in 1992 (150 in 1978).

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 50-90 pairs in 1985-89

(large decrease: 150-300 pairs in 1973-77; cf. decreases in France and the Netherlands, *Brit. Birds* 77: 586; 86: 37). NORWAY Fourth record: adult male ringed at Ilene, Tonsberg, Vestfold, on 11th June 1993*.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 300-370 pairs in 1985-89. FAROE ISLANDS Third record: juvenile in Kollafjardardalur, Streymoy, on 16th November 1992 (found dead on following day).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* FRANCE Northerly invasion: about 100 pairs breeding at 13 non-traditional sites in 1992, resulting from influx starting on 23rd April, 'due probably to drought and population pressure in central and southern Spain' (*Alauda* 61: 129-136, 195-197). GREAT BRITAIN Influx: at least 18 in May 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 456). GREECE First breeding record: pair in Axios Delta, Macedonia, in 1991 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 61: 107-112).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* ICELAND Third record: 28th-31st October 1991 (*Bliki* 13: 18).

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* LUXEMBURG First record: 16th May 1991 (*Regulus* 12: 41).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 1,000-1,200 pairs in 1985-89 (rapid increase: 360-500 pairs in 1973-77; cf. increases in Belgium, Italy and Spain, *Brit. Birds* 85: 644).

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: five to 25 pairs in 1985-89 (the same as in 1973-77).

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 200-300 pairs in 1985-89 (rapid increase: 100-150 pairs in 1973-77; cf. increases or recent breeding in Belgium, France, Moldova and Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 85: 444; 86: 279).

Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* SPAIN Second record (escape/vagrant): 12th September 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 74).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* SPAIN First confirmed breeding: two pairs at Albufera de Valencia in 1993.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 0 to five pairs in 1985-89.

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* FRANCE Escape/vagrant: adult at Le Portel, Pas-de-Calais, on 26th June 1993* (no records before 1987, but now annual).

Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor* FRANCE Escapes/vagrants: up to two in étang de l'Arnel, Hérault, on 7th and 18th April 1993*.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* ICELAND First record: 7th May 1987 (*Bliki* 8: 22). POLAND First record: two on 17th-19th April 1990 (*Notatki Orn.* 33: 113). Both records will refer to escaped or feral individuals.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* ESTONIA Third to fifth breeding records: Miltkli, Pärnu District, in 1991, Aljava, Muhu Island, in 1992 and Kuressaare, Saaremaa Island, also in 1992.

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii* NETHERLANDS Returning vagrant: one of the two which occurred in winters 1987/88 and 1988/89 reappeared in December-March 1990/91, October-February 1991/92 and, for the sixth winter, from 6th November 1992 (*Dutch Birding* 15: 147).

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* BULGARIA High count: 59,115 at Shabla-Ezeretz and Durankulak Lakes on 12th January 1993. NORWAY Correction: fourth record (*Brit. Birds* 86: 279) was on 25th (not 15th) September 1991.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* ICELAND Fourth record: 1st May 1991 (*Bliki* 13: 20).

American Wigeon *Anas americana* CANARY ISLANDS First record: Gran Canaria from 22nd February to 29th March 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 75). DENMARK Date correction: first record was on 3rd-11th April 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 38). ICELAND Vagrant: 14th July 1991 (previous total 72; *Bliki* 13: 20). NETHERLANDS Vagrants: males on 24th-31st March 1991 and 16th-22nd October 1991 (15 previous records; *Dutch Birding* 15: 147).

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata* NETHERLANDS Presumed escape: adult male on 1st June 1991 (*Dutch Birding* 15: 157).

Common Teal *Anas crecca* BELGIUM Third record of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: 13th-14th May 1990 (*Oriolus* 59: 32). DENMARK Sixth record of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: male at Borreby Mose, Zealand, on 4th-11th June 1993*. ICELAND Vagrants of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: three in 1991 (previous total 37, not 72 as stated incorrectly in *Brit. Birds* 86: 279; *Bliki* 13: 20). NORWAY Correction: sixth record of Nearctic race *carolinensis* (*Brit. Birds* 86: 297) was on 25th-26th (not 15th-26th) April 1991.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* MOROCCO Ninth record (new information): drake at

Oued Massa estuary on 2nd-10th January 1993 and pair there on 2nd-4th February 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 279). SPAIN Vagrants: four in 1990, including one on Menorca (five previous records; *Ardeola* 39: 76).

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* BULGARIA Third record: Arkutino Marsh, on 16th May 1991. MOROCCO Sixth breeding record and first confirmed in northeastern Morocco: over 90 individuals, including two pairs with young, in marshes of Oued Moulouya estuary, on 6th June 1993.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: juvenile female on El Hierro from December 1992 to April 1993*. ICELAND Vagrant: 20th May 1991 (previous total 16; *Bliki* 13: 20). NETHERLANDS Vagrant: male on 5th-8th May 1991 (12 previous records; *Dutch Birding* 15: 147).

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* GREAT BRITAIN Fourth record: first-winter male in November-December 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 463).

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* ICELAND Fifth and sixth records: 8th June 1991 and 19th-29th September 1991 (*Bliki* 13: 22). LATVIA Second record: two males and six females/first-winters on 20th-26th January 1991 (*List of Latvian Bird Species 1993*; this entry replaces that given earlier, *Brit. Birds* 84: 228).

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* ICELAND Second record: individual reported during May 1988 to December 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 446) seen again from 18th May to 9th August 1991 (*Bliki* 13: 22) and 25th May to 24th September 1992*. NETHERLANDS Presumed escape: adult male on 19th February 1991 (*Dutch Birding* 15: 157).

Hooded Merganser *Mergus cucullatus* NORWAY Amendment: 1991 record (*Brit. Birds* 86: 280) referred to presumed escape.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* MOROCCO Date extension: party constituting first record (*Brit. Birds* 86: 280) stayed to 29th January 1993.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* NETHERLANDS Vagrant: female on 10th-24th November 1991 (eight previous records, all in female-type plumage in November-March, plus one in November-December 1987 which is regarded as an escape from captivity; *Dutch Birding* 15: 147-148).

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* BULGARIA First winter record: Arkutino, 17th January 1993.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* BULGARIA Recolonisation of some former breeding sites in south: successful breeding pair in 1992 and 1993. CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: eight to ten pairs in 1985-89. FINLAND Best-ever breeding result: 88 fledglings in 1993 (71 in 1992). (Cf. increases in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 86: 39, 281.)

Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus* SWEDEN First record: one in Skåne and Värmland in May 1993* (almost certainly same bird reported from Germany and Finland), will probably be classed as escape.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* DENMARK Second record: immature at Skagen, N-Jutland, on 22nd-23rd May 1993*.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* NETHERLANDS Third record: male colour-ringed on 5th February 1992 for reintroduction scheme in northeastern Italy (where last seen on 26th April 1992) reappeared at Durgerdam and Ransdorp, Noordholland, on 28th April to 3rd May 1993* (plate 1).

Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant/escape: Powys and Dyfed from November 1977 to February 1978, admitted to Category D (*Brit. Birds* 86: 538).

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* CANARY ISLANDS First record: Tenerife on 26th-31st March 1990 (not 1991 as noted earlier; *Ardeola* 39: 76-77). DENMARK Influx: about ten during April-June 1993*. FINLAND Successful interbreeding: male Pallid and female Montagu's *C. pygargus* produced three hybrid young at Savukoski, northern Finland, in summer 1993. FRANCE Small influx: males at Montreuil-Bellay, Maine-et-Loire, on 20th March 1993*, at Saint-Martin-de-Seignanx, Pyrénées-Atlantiques, on 27th March 1993*, near Chartres, Eure-et-Loir, on 28th March 1993*, and displaying male holding territory at Issigeac, Dordogne, from 14th April to 5th May 1993*. GREAT BRITAIN Fourth to seventh records: second-summer male in Perthshire on 5th May 1993*, second-summer male at Holliwell Point, Essex, on 13th-15th June 1993*, adult male at Saddlington Reservoir, Leicestershire, on 15th September 1993* and male at Sumburgh, Shetland, on 15th-16th September 1993*.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* BULGARIA Census: about 60 nesting pairs in three breeding areas in 1992.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* DENMARK Fifth record: Skagen on 18th May 1991 (*DOFT* 87: 234). HUNGARY First breeding record for Central Europe: pair reared one young in 1992, following increasing numbers in recent years—over 260 records in 1976-92, in every month, but mostly July-October (*Limicola* 7: 141-146).

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* BULGARIA First winter record: first-winter at Arkutino on 17th January 1993.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* ISRAEL First record: adult/sub-adult in northwestern Negev, 1st-2nd November 1992.

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* FINLAND Second and third records: juveniles/sub-adults on 13th-16th May 1982 and 17th June 1990 (*Lintunies* 18: 179; 27: 258).

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* DENMARK Sixth record: Stevns Klint, Zealand, on 29th August 1991. Deletion: record on 19th May 1991 now rejected (*DOFT* 87: 234). NETHERLANDS Second record: pale-morph, Knardijk, Flevoland, on 24th April 1993 (first was in May 1992, *Brit. Birds* 86: 281).

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* BULGARIA First breeding record: pair bred in old nest of Common Raven *Corvus corax* in south in 1992.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* BELGIUM Vagrant: first-summer female at Sombrefte,

province of Namur, on 15th June 1993. DENMARK Small influx: about 75 during spring 1993. GREAT BRITAIN Largest-ever influx: 102 in 1992, mostly in the second half of May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 466-474).

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* POLAND Third record: adult on 20th September 1990 (*Notatki Orn.* 33: 114).

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* DENMARK First record: Skagen on 7th May 1991 (*DOFT* 87: 234). FINLAND First record: second-year in Kitec on 29th April 1992.

Corn Crane *Crex crex* SWEDEN Second-highest total in recent years: 250 males on Swedish mainland in 1992.

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* FRANCE Vagrant: Saint-Alban-d'Ay, Ardèche, on 28th-29th March 1993.

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* DENMARK First record since 1959: 27th July to 24th August 1991 (*DOFT* 87: 235).

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* CZECH REPUBLIC Establishment as breeder: one pair 1943, one pair 1946-47, one to nine pairs 1948-58, one pair 1961, five pairs 1990, four pairs 1991, two breeding pairs and two non-breeding pairs 1993. UKRAINE First breeding record in western Ukraine: two pairs in Javoriv district, Lviv Region, during May-July 1993.



1. Male Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, Netherlands, April 1993 (Armond B. van den Berg)

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus* NETHERLANDS Summering: male at Zwanenwater, Noord-holland, from April 1993*, probably same as one in June-October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 282).

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* LATVIA First record: Īdena fish-ponds, Rēzekne district, during May-June 1993. POLAND Revision: a nineteenth-century record now accepted, so record in April 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 11) becomes sixth.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* FRANCE Vagrant: baie de Somme, Somme, on 23rd May 1993*. ICELAND Third record: 11th June 1987 (*Bliki* 8: 27). POLAND Fifth to seventh records: 30th June 1989 (*Notatki Orn.* 32: 130), Mietkow Reservoir from 26th August to 2nd September 1990, and Rewa in Puck Bay on 27th August 1992 (with rejection of one old record, that in August 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 325, becomes fourth).

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* SPAIN Second record: May-August 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 77).

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* CYPRUS Second record: adult in summer plumage at Paralimni Lake, eastern Cyprus, on 1th January 1993 (first record was in November 1991, *Brit. Birds* 86: 40).

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: August 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 177). MALTA Seventh record: July 1993.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: four in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 177). NORWAY Fourth and fifth records: Nærlandssanden, Hå, Rogaland, on 11th-13th June 1993* and second individual on 13th June 1993* (several earlier records of *P. fulva*/*P. dominica* are still under consideration).

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* DENMARK Deletion: first and only record (*Brit. Birds* 85: 448) now rejected (*DOFT* 87: 235).

American Golden Plover/Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*/*P. fulva* DENMARK Sixth record: 19th April 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 448). POLAND Vagrant: 17th July 1990 (four previous records: *Notatki Orn.* 33: 115). SPAIN Vagrant: juvenile on 29th September 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 77).

Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria* FRANCE Vagrant: single migrating with Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* over Sainte-Cécile-les-Vignes, Vaucluse, on 17th March 1993*.

SPAIN Fourth recent record: Toledo in March 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 77; others before rarities committee-established).

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* AZORES Vagrants: eight on 28th August 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 78). ICELAND Third record: 5th October 1991 (*Bliki* 13: 25).

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* IRELAND First record: juvenile at North Slob, Co. Wexford, on 3rd-6th September 1992.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* GREAT BRITAIN Second record: adult from 29th July to 3rd August 1992 (first was in July 1986; *Brit. Birds* 86: 478).

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* AZORES Vagrants: two juveniles on 28th August 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 78).

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* AZORES Vagrants: 48 on Terceira on 28th August 1990 and two on São Miguel on 30th August 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 78). BELGIUM First record: adult on 28th September 1991 (*Aves* 29: 99).

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* CANARY ISLANDS First record: Tenerife on 21st October 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 78). NETHERLANDS Third record: adult, Julianadorp, Noordholland, on 31st July to 1st August 1993.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* AZORES Vagrant: 28th August 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 78). BELGIUM Vagrants: 31st August to 1st September 1988 (total now 16 records: *Oriolus* 59: 33); juveniles on 1th-5th October 1991 and 14th October 1991 (*Aves* 29: 99). CANARY ISLANDS Vagrants: 23rd July to 2nd August 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 78) and adult and juvenile on El Hierro in September 1992*. ICELAND Vagrants: 23rd September and 5th-19th October 1991 (previous total 20; *Bliki* 13: 25). NETHERLANDS Vagrants: six in 1990 (singly May, July, August, three in September; 42 previous records; *Dutch Birding* 15: 149). POLAND Vagrants: 28th July 1990 (*Notatki Orn.* 33: 115), Brzeszcze on 1th-5th September 1991, Goczałkowice Zdrój on 23rd October 1992 and one caught at Mechelinki, Puck Bay, on 6th and 9th May 1993. SPAIN Vagrants: 2nd-12th September 1988, 11th-17th September 1988 and 11th August 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 78).

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* CZECHOSLOVAKIA (now SLOVAKIA) First record: Senne, Eastern Slovakia, on 22nd May 1988 (*Sylvia* 27: 114-115). LATVIA Fourth record: 16th February 1992 (*List of Latvian Bird Species 1993*).

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* LATVIA Influx: up to 100 at Nagli fish-ponds, Rēzekne district, on 26th-27th May 1993. MOROCCO Third record: four at Oued Sous estuary, on 27th August 1992* (second was also at Oued Sous, in January 1992, *Brit. Birds* 85: 450). UKRAINE Fourth record in western Ukraine: adult at Shack National Park, Volyn Region, on 26th July 1993.

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* NORWAY Second record: Grudavatnet, Klepp, Rogaland, on 26th-30th May 1993.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* ICELAND Fifth record: 27th May 1986 (*Bliki* 7: 32). ITALY Vagrant: 5th October 1991 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 62: 187-188). NETHERLANDS Eighth record: Lauwersmeer, Friesland, on 12th-16th June 1993. POLAND Vagrant: 30th September 1990 (eight previous records; *Notatki Orn.* 33: 115). SPAIN Vagrant: 6th October 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 78).

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* NETHERLANDS Seventh record: adult from 14th August to 5th October 1991 (*Dutch Birding* 15: 150).

Long-billed Dowitcher/Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus/L. griseus* POLAND Vagrant: 20th July 1990 (four previous records; *Notatki Orn.* 33: 115).

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 30-60 pairs in 1985-89 (rapid decrease: 250-500 pairs in 1973-77).

Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* BULGARIA Black Sea coast, south of Burgas, on 16th January 1993. GREECE Aghios Thomas, Amvrakikos Gulf, on 14th August 1988 (*Biol. Conserv.* 53: 47-60). ITALY Frattarolo Natural Reserve, Apulia, in spring 1989; Vendicari marshes, Sicily, in winter 1993 (probably wintering); 17 records during 1897-1989 and 84 specimens killed during 1828-1972. MOROCCO In winter 1992/93, two at Merja Zerga until at least 29th January 1993 and one until 16th February 1993; three in the lower Loukkos Valley, near Larache, on 18th February 1993. (We are publishing all records received of this species.)

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: five to 15 pairs in 1985-89 (decrease: 25-50 pairs in 1973-77).

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 40-60 pairs in 1985-89 (rapid decrease, 80-150 pairs in 1973-77).

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* NORWAY First record: Stjordal, Nord-Trondelag, on 8th-9th May 1993*.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* ICELAND Eighth record: 18th October 1986 (*Bliki* 7: 33). POLAND First record: 26th September 1990 (*Notatki Orn.* 33: 115). PORTUGAL Vagrant: 7th January 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 78). SPAIN Vagrant: 26th-27th October 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 78). SWEDEN Sixth record: Lake Tysslingen, Närke, on 22nd June 1993*.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: five to 15 pairs in 1985-89 (regular breeding since late 1970s). ICELAND First record: 28th April 1986 (*Bliki* 8: 31).

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* UKRAINE Second record in western Ukraine: two at Shack National Park, Volyn Region, on 26th July 1993.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* BELGIUM Vagrant: 6th-7th May 1990 and 19th-20th May 1990 (nine previous records: *Oriolus* 59: 33). FRANCE Vagrant: female in marais d'Olonne, Vendée, on 28th May 1993*. LATVIA First record: 10th May 1992 (*List of Latvian Bird Species 1993*). NORWAY Fourth record: adult female, Andenes, Andoya, Nordland, on 13th-16th June 1993.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* HUNGARY Second to fifth records: Budapest in February 1993*, near Balmazújváros (date unknown) in 1993*, in Budapest on 21st May 1993*, and adult moulting from summer to winter plumage at the Hortobágy-Halastó from 15th June to July 1993*.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: one to five pairs in 1985-89 (regular breeding since 1983). FRANCE Breeding outside Camargue: five pairs in Indre-et-Loire département and six pairs in Maine-et-Loire département, both along the Loire River, and up to 50 pairs in Vendée, up to July 1993.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* FRANCE Vagrant: adult near Chalon-sur-Saône, Saône-et-Loire, on 15th April 1993*. SPAIN Vagrants: two in 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 79).

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* BELGIUM Autumn influx and winter record: 11 in September to early October 1990 and a juvenile on 22nd December 1990 (48 previous records: *Oriolus* 59: 34).

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* PORTUGAL First record: 28th February to 8th April 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 79). SPAIN Third and fourth records: 19th January to 12th March 1990 and 2nd February 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 79).

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 80,000-150,000 pairs in 1985-89 (rapid decrease: 200,000-350,000 pairs in 1973-77).

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus* MOROCCO Third record: adult at Agadir, on 17th November 1988* (previous records noted have been in Israel in March, May and August 1989, in Jordan in March 1989 and in Gibraltar in August 1992, *Brit. Birds* 86: 284; one in Great Britain in February 1991 was regarded as probably an escape from captivity, *Ibis* 135: 497).

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* AUSTRIA Second record: two in breeding plumage at Rheindelta, Lake of Constance, Vorarlberg, on 20th-21st May 1993.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* AUSTRIA First record: Rheindelta, Lake of Constance, Vorarlberg, from 8th April to 9th May and on 19th-22nd May 1993. AZORES Vagrant: 29th August 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 79). BULGARIA First and second records: adults at Mandra Lake, Burgas Region, on 28th February 1992 and Galata, Varna Region, on 2nd August 1993. ICELAND Vagrants: three in 1991 (previous total 35; *Bliki* 13: 28). MOROCCO Fifteenth record: first-winter at Rabat on 6th-31st January 1993. PORTUGAL Vagrants: eight in 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 79). SPAIN Vagrants: 27 in 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 79). SWEDEN Fifth record: Halmstad, Halland, from 21st May to at least end of July 1993*.

Common Gull *Larus canus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: three to seven pairs in 1985-89 (first breeding in 1986).

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* SWEDEN Precipitous decline: data from several areas indicate 75%-90% declines since 1980 (cf. decrease in Finland, *Brit. Birds* 79: 288).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoideus* POLAND Fourth record: 19th January 1990 (*Notatki Orn.* 33: 116).

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* LATVIA First and second breeding records: western shore of Riga Gulf in 1992 (*List of Latvian Bird Species 1993*) and two nests at same site in May-June 1993.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* POLAND Largest-ever influx: about 120 on Baltic coast and eight inland records in January-February 1993.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengaleusis* GREAT BRITAIN Breeding: female, presumed same individual as in previous eight years, paired with male Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis* and reared one hybrid young on Farne Islands, Northumberland, in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 492).

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* BULGARIA Increase: from 595 pairs in 1992 to about 1,200 pairs in 1993, at only breeding site, in Atanasovo Lake Reserve, Burgas Region, after provision of 11 artificial breeding platforms by Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 250-300 pairs in 1985-89.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* HUNGARY Third record: adult in summer plumage at Lake of Fertő, near Fertőujlak, on 29th July 1993*.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: August 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 492).

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* FRANCE First significant wintering: up to 120 on étang de l'Or, Hérault, in February 1993. LATVIA Third record: at least two at Nagli fish-ponds, Rēzekne district, during May-June 1993 (first breeding recorded there in 1992).

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 20-50 pairs in 1985-89 (rapid decrease, 80-120 pairs in 1973-77).

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* GREAT BRITAIN Record numbers: 41 in 1992 (20 in May and 21 in July-October, *Brit. Birds* 86: 493-494).

Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: one first seen in May-June 1990 returned to Landy, Devon, in April-June 1991 and March-April 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 496).

Bolle's Pigeon *Columba bollii* CANARY ISLANDS First confirmed breeding on El Hierro: in February 1993 (*Ilanda* 61: 118; first recorded on El Hierro in August 1984, *Brit. Birds* 80: 12).

African Collared Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea* CANARY ISLANDS Feral population: breeding

population of escaped cagebirds of form 'risoria', known as 'Barbary Dove', established on Tenerife 'in last few years'.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* DENMARK Second record: Ejby, Copenhagen, Zealand, during June-July 1993* (presumed escape).

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* GREAT BRITAIN First record: Calf of Man, Isle of Man, on 31st October 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 496).

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* NORWAY Fourth record: second-year, Utsira, Rogaland, on 24th April 1993*.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* MALTA First breeding record: single newly fledged young with Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* in July 1993.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* ICELAND Third record: 13th October 1987 (*Bliki* 8: 32).

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* ANDORRA First record for many years (possibly this century): male seen and heard calling at 1,200 m on 4th-12th June 1993 (probably a pair). SWEDEN Eighth record and first since 1975: Riseberga, Skåne, on 1st-29th June 1993*.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* NETHERLANDS Third record: 9th February 1991 (not second record and not 1992 as noted *Brit. Birds* 86: 43; two previous records, in 1973-81 and February 1988, *Dutch Birding* 15: 151).

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* BELGIUM Second record: 19th-23rd February 1990 (*Oriolus* 59: 34). DENMARK Vagrants: two, both at Skagen, N-Jutland, on 8th-10th March 1993* and 25th April 1993*. FRANCE Probably seventh and eighth records this century: males on Ouessant, Finistère, on 2nd May 1993*, and in baie de Seine, Seine-Maritime, on 20th June 1993*.

Pygmy Owl *Glucidium passerinum* DENMARK Vagrant: Tornby Klitplantage, N-Jutland, on 7th-10th March 1993*.

Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* ICELAND First and only record: immature male on 23rd October 1955 (*Náttúrufraðingurinn* 61: 83-84).

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* GREAT BRITAIN Fourth record (fifth individual): St Andrews, Fife, on 8th-10th November 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 497).

Plain Swift *Apus unicolor* MOROCCO Third to fifth possible breeding records: on Atlantic

coast between Agadir and Tamri, about 40 flying around sea-cliff south of Tamri estuary on 23rd April 1992*, with at least four pairs 'hurtling into breeding holes' on 19th April 1993, and about ten investigating cliff-crevices between Agadir and Cap Rhir on 30th March 1993* (previous possible breeding records were in same area in April 1988, *Brit. Birds* 83: 13, and April 1990).

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* POLAND Fourth and fifth records: 14th September 1990 (*Notatki Orn.* 33: 117) and at Darłówo on 1st April 1992.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: 11th June 1989 (*Ardeola* 39: 80).

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* DENMARK Second record: Vesterlund Kro, Væmngene, W-Jutland, on 29th June 1993*.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* LATVIA Third record: 13th June 1991 (*List of Latvian Bird Species* 1993).

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* SWEDEN Absence: not a single record in 1992, for the first time in 300 years.

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus* BELARUS Second breeding record: male near occupied hole at Bragin, Gomel region, on 28th May 1993 (first nest was near Komarin, Bragin district, in 1980, *Arch. BSSR Acad. Sci. Ser. Biol. Sci.* 1988, no. 2: 87).

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos* FINLAND Decline: 19 nests with 35-40 young in 1992 (*Lintumies* 27: 188); 15 nests with 30-40 young in 1993.

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* GREAT BRITAIN First record: Lundy, Devon, on 24th-25th April 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 500-501).

White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera* POLAND Fifth record: two males at Sédziszów, southeast Poland, on 12th May 1993 (previous record was in March 1988, *Notatki Orn.* 31: 80).

Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* SWEDEN First record: Bofasterud, near Karlstad, Värmland, on 6th-7th May 1993*.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* POLAND Fourth and fifth records: about 20 on 18th February 1990 and one on 4th September 1990 (*Notatki Orn.* 33: 118).

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* DENMARK Vagrants: eight in 1991 (*DOFT* 87: 222). FRANCE Spring record: baie de Seine, Seine-Maritime, on 23rd April 1993*. LATVIA First record: 8th September 1990 (*List of Latvian Bird Species* 1993). LUXEMBURG Vagrant:

11th April 1991 (*Regulus* 12: 13). MOROCCO Twentieth record: Sidi-Bettache, on 21st December 1992. SWEDEN Vagrants: 44 records in 1992.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* MALTA First breeding records: pairs bred in two localities in spring 1993.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: 15 in September-October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 504). NETHERLANDS Vagrant: Texel on 20th October 1991 (*Dutch Birding* 15: 151). POLAND Vagrant: 24th February 1990 (18 previous records: *Notatki Om.* 33: 118). SWEDEN Fourth record: ringed at Landsort Bird Observatory, Södermanland, on 2nd May 1993*.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 501).

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* GREAT BRITAIN High numbers: 12 in 1992, most in May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 504-505).

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* DENMARK First record of black-headed race *M. f. feldegg*: Arup Vejle on 9th-11th June 1989 (*DOFT* 87: 236).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: three in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 505). HUNGARY Fourth and fifth records: males on Derzsi fish-pond at the Hortobágy, on 22nd April 1993*, and at Fertőújlak, near the Lake of Fertő, on 7th May 1993*. LATVIA First breeding record: successful breeding at Jelgava in June 1993 (male observed at same place in 1982, 1985, 1988 and 1989). NETHERLANDS Second and third records: male on 29th April 1991 (*Dutch Birding* 15: 152) and male at Wilp, Gelderland, on 4th-5th May 1993 (first was in August-September 1984; *Dutch Birding* 15: 152). POLAND Summer records: adult males on 13th May 1990 and 8th June 1990 (*Notatki Om.* 33: 118). Largest-ever influx: 24 in Gdańsk Bay during 24th April to 23rd May 1993 (previous influx on Hel Peninsula in spring 1988, *Notatki Om.* 31: 80).

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* ICELAND Fourth record of race *yarrellii*: 8th April 1986 (*Bliki* 8: 34).

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant/escape: Noss, Shetland, on 25th-26th June 1985, admitted to Category D (*Brit. Birds* 86: 538).

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* ICELAND Influx: 52 in 1991 (cf. 262 during 1979-90; *Bliki* 13: 30-31).

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* NETHERLANDS First confirmed breeding since 1933 of brown-bellied race *aquaticus*: four young fledged at Epen, Limburg, in May 1993.

Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri* FRANCE First record: female on Ouessant on 14th May 1993*.

Plumbeous Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus* SWEDEN First record: Halmstad, Halland, on 12th-30th June 1993* (probable escape).

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* BULGARIA First record of race *maura*: female at Kaliakra on 29th May 1993. DENMARK Nineteenth and twentieth records of race *maura/stejnegeri*: female ringed at Blåvand, W-Jutland, on 29th May 1991, and first-year male at Blåvand, on 5th-7th October 1991 (*DOFT* 87: 236). FINLAND First breeding record of race *maura*: two pairs bred in Kausamo in 1992. GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants of eastern race *maura/stejnegeri*: 15 in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 507-508).

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* DENMARK First and second records: 13th June 1991 and 27th October to 1st November 1991 (*DOFT* 87: 237).

Finsch's Wheatear *Oenanthe finschii* BULGARIA First to third records, and first possible breeding: male singing at Emona on 26th May 1993, with female carrying food on 1st July 1993; male at Kamen Briag (100 km north of Emona, both on Black Sea coast) on 30th June 1993.

Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopygma* CYPRUS First record: Cape Greco, Eastern Cyprus, on 13th April 1993.

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha* CYPRUS Third record: male at Ayia Napa Forest on 22nd May 1993 (previous records were in April 1987).

White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* CYPRUS Third record: adult male at Aygas Gorge, Western Cyprus, on 30th March 1993 (second record was in May 1985).

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* GREAT BRITAIN First and second records: first-summer male on 1th-7th June 1985 and male on 4th June 1987, previously included in Category D, now admitted to Category A (*Brit. Birds* 86: 509-511).

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* POLAND Vagrant: female on 4th May 1990 (seven previous records: *Notatki Om.* 33: 118).

Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* GREAT BRITAIN Fourth record: first-winter female on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 1st-8th October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 511).

Grey-backed Thrush *Turdus hortulorum* NETHERLANDS Presumed and certain escapes: singing male on 16th-18th May 1991 (unringed individual known to have escaped), and dead individual on 19th March 1992, which had been ringed as cagebird in 1986 and escaped in 1990 (*Dutch Birding* 15: 157).

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 511). NETHERLANDS Sixth record: Zwanerwater, Noordholland, on 18th October 1992*.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* DENMARK Fourth record: *atroregularis* on 7th December 1986 (*DOFT* 87: 237); December 1991 record (*Brit. Birds* 85: 459) becomes fifth. GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: two in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 511).

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* NETHERLANDS Influx: at least four during 8th-15th October 1990 (last breeding was one pair in 1985; *Dutch Birding* 15: 152).

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* BULGARIA Second record: Atanasovo Lake Reserve, Burgas Region, on 29th August 1987. NETHERLANDS Vagrant: first record for Flevoland on 8th September 1990 (no records during 1986-89, but one pair bred in Zeeland in 1990, *Brit. Birds* 85: 12; *Dutch Birding* 15: 152-153).

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: September 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 512).

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* DENMARK Fourth record: Blåvand on 7th October 1991 (*DOFT* 87: 237). GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: two in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 512).

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* BULGARIA Vagrant: Atanasovo Lake Reserve, Burgas Region, on 1st May 1993.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: two in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 512).

Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis* ISRAEL Fifth and sixth records: single ringed at Eilat and single in Bet Shean Valley in June 1993.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* BELGIUM First record: 9th September 1990 (*Oriolus* 59: 35).

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* GREAT BRITAIN Highest-ever total: five in 1992, including first-ever (three) in spring (*Brit. Birds* 86: 513).

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* POLAND Fourth record: 26th May 1990 (*Notatki Orn.* 33: 118).

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* GREAT BRITAIN Second record: Spurn, Humberside, on 8th-9th June 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 513). ITALY Vagrant: first record on northwest Adriatic coast, on 3rd April 1991 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 62: 190-191).

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* DENMARK Deletion: sole record, of one ringed on Christianso on 20th September 1976, now accepted as referring to female Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans* (of which there were 19 records to the end of 1991; *DOFT* 87: 238-241).

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* AUSTRIA Vagrant: Rheindelta, Lake of Constance, Vorarlberg, on 1st-2nd May 1993.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* GREAT BRITAIN Highest-ever total: seven in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 515). ICELAND Deletion: report in October 1989 (*Bliki* 11: 56; *Brit. Birds* 85: 459) re-evaluated and now rejected (*Bliki* 13: 42). ITALY Range extension: first breeding in low Veronese Plain, in 1991 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 62: 193-194). NETHERLANDS Fourth record: male, De Cocksdorp, Texel, Noordholland, on 26th-29th May 1993.

Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppellii* DENMARK First record: female at Hovblege, Mon, on 7th-8th May 1993*. GREAT BRITAIN Fourth record: first-winter at Holme, Norfolk, on 31st August to 4th September 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 515).

Desert Warbler *Sylvia naia* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 516).

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* CZECH REPUBLIC First breeding record: two young being fed by parents in central part of Krkonoše Mountains, northeast Bohemia, on 16th July 1992; total of 13 singing males in seven localities in Krkonoše Mountains during 13th-29th June 1992; singing males observed regularly since 1980s. DENMARK Small influx: about 21 individuals during spring 1993. GREAT BRITAIN Highest-ever numbers: 29 in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 516-517). SWEDEN Second-highest total ever: five breeding records and some 230 singing males in 1992.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* POLAND

Second record: singing male near Trzcianne, Biebrza Marshes, on 14th May 1993 (first record was in September 1986, *Notatki Orn.* 29: 145). SWEDEN Highest number since early 1950s: at least nine singing males at Abisko, Lappland, in late July 1993*; male singing near Luleå, Norrbotten, on 9th-12th July 1993*.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* BELGIUM Vagrant: 25th October 1990 (record on 27th October 1990, *Brit. Birds* 85: 459, becomes thirteenth; *Aves* 29: 102; *Oriolus* 59: 35-36). DENMARK Vagrants: five in 1991 (*DOFT* 87: 224). FINLAND Vagrants: 11 in autumn 1991 (*Lintumies* 27: 270). LUXEMBURG First record: 19th September 1990 (*Regulus* 12: 44). NETHERLANDS Vagrants: 25th November 1991 and 7th-8th December 1991 (cf. ten in 1989 and one in 1990; 36 records up to 1988; *Dutch Birding* 15: 153). SWEDEN Vagrants: 13 in 1992.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* BELGIUM Vagrants: 3rd-6th August 1988 [an extraordinarily early date] and 10th October 1988 (total now 163 records; *Oriolus* 59: 35). DENMARK Vagrants: 23 in 1991 (*DOFT* 87: 221). FINLAND Vagrants: 19 in autumn 1991 (*Lintumies* 27: 270). ICELAND Vagrants: 15th-16th October 1991 and 17th October 1991 (previous total 41; *Bliki* 13: 34). LUXEMBURG First record: 2nd October 1990 (*Regulus* 12: 44). SPAIN Vagrant: Menorca on 18th October 1989 (*Ardeola* 39: 81). SWEDEN Vagrants: 18 in 1992.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* DENMARK Status: total of eight records to end of 1991 (*DOFT* 87: 238; cf. 25 Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus*). GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: three in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 520). NETHERLANDS Status: six, all in October, up to 1991 (cf. 14 records of Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus*; *Dutch Birding* 15: 154).

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* BELGIUM Vagrants: 11th-15th November 1990 (eight previous records; *Oriolus* 59: 35), and 16th October 1991 (*Aves* 29: 101). DENMARK Status: total of 25 records to end of 1991 (*DOFT* 87: 238; cf. eight Radde's Warblers *P. schwarzi*). GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: 13 in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 520-521). NETHERLANDS Status: 14 records up to 1991 (cf. six records of Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi*; *Dutch Birding* 15: 151).

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* LATVIA Third and fourth records of eastern race *tristis*: trapped on 18th September 1990 and 29th September 1991 (*List of Latvian Bird Species 1993*).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula* ICELAND First record: immature found exhausted on 23rd November 1987 (*Bliki* 8: 40).

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* LUXEMBURG First record: 15th June 1987 (*Regulus* 12: 44). SPAIN First to fourth recent records: 1st October 1985, 8th October 1985, 16th October 1985 and 6th October 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 82).

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata* MOROCCO Fourth and fifth records: Midekt on 20th April 1993* and Merzouga on 26th April 1993*.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* SPAIN Second recent record: 2nd May 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 82).

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* FINLAND Large influxes: 4,000 migrants and over 2,000 ringed at Hanko Bird Observatory, southern Finland, in autumn 1991; 4,040 migrants and 2,322 ringed there in autumn 1992 (cf. large influxes in Finland in 1977 and 1985, *Brit. Birds* 79: 290-291).

Willow Tit *Parus montanus* FINLAND Large influx: 2,690 ringed at Hanko Bird Observatory, southern Finland, and almost 2,000 ringed in Joensuu at Höytiäinen, eastern Finland, in autumn 1991 (largest-ever influx for southern Finland).

Coal Tit *Parus ater* FINLAND Massive influx: 35,000 on migration and almost 5,000 ringed at Hanko Bird Observatory on the southern coast in autumn 1991 (cf. influxes to Denmark in 1985 and 1988, and to Sweden in 1990, *Brit. Birds* 82: 353; 84: 234).

Azure Tit *Parus cyaneus* POLAND Only recent record: 18th March 1990 (about 27 previous records; *Notatki Orn.* 33: 118).

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* FINLAND Largest irruption since mid 1970s: 160 ringed in Luvia at Säppi Bird Observatory and 314 in Åland at Långskär Bird Observatory in autumn 1991 (*Lintumies* 27: 132-139).

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* GERMANY Breeding census: increased to 71,000-89,000 pairs in early 1990s (*Limicola* 7: 130-139).

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* GERMANY Breeding census: 'almost extinct' . . . last pair bred in 1987* (*Limicola* 7: 130-139).

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* GERMANY Breeding census: decreased to 1,900-2,300 pairs in early 1990s (*Limicola* 7: 130-139). GREAT BRITAIN Fifth and sixth records of

eastern race *pallidirostris*: 21st-23rd April 1992 and 4th-7th October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 524).

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* GERMANY Breeding census: decreased to 30-40 pairs in early 1990s (*Limicola* 7: 130-139).

Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* ICELAND Largest-ever influx: 91 in 1991, mostly in late October and early November (cf. 93 prior to 1979 and only 19 during 1979-90; *Bliki* 13: 36-37).

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* ICELAND Largest-ever influx: 223 in 1991, mostly in late October and early November, following small influx in early November 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 46; cf. 137 during 1979-90; *Bliki* 13: 37-40).

Common Raven *Corvus corax* CANARY ISLANDS Census: breeding population estimated at 622-667 pairs in 1989 (decline during last decade).

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* BULGARIA Second record of the race *italiae*: male displaying on nest of Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and female visiting same nest 5 km south of Blagoevgrad, Sofia Region, on 2nd July 1993 (first record: 29th June 1987 and 10th June 1988, at least one breeding pair near Chernitchevo, Kardzhali Region, *Der Falke* 12: 407).

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* CANARY ISLANDS First record for Tenerife: three in June 1992 (breeding was first recorded on Gran Canaria in 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 16).

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 525).

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* BELGIUM Vagrants: 30th November 1990 to April 1991 and 15th December 1990 (eight previous records; *Oriolus* 59: 35, 37).

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* GREAT BRITAIN Influx: 24 during 31st July 1990 to 1st June 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 499-500; 85: 549-550; 86: 526). NETHERLANDS Influx: at least 13 during August 1990 to April 1991 (cf. 32 in irruption of September 1889 and only seven records in the intervening 100 years; *Dutch Birding* 15: 155, 206-214).

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* FRANCE Second to third or fourth records: Camargue, on 17th April 1993*, perhaps same in Camargue, Bouches-du-Rhône, on 8th May 1993*, and two at Barcaggio, Haute-Corse, around 10th May 1993*. GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: June 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 528).

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* BULGARIA Fourth breeding locality: singing male at Osogovo Mountain, Sofia Region, Kiustendil District, on 1st July 1993. FRANCE First breeding records: up to three pairs in Franche-Comté Region, and up to two pairs in Pas-de-Calais département, with at least one pair with young at each site, in 1993 (total of 8-11 singing males in spring 1993). SPAIN First to third records: 8th September 1988, 15th September 1988 (*Ardeola* 39: 82) and 20th September 1990.

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: singing male in Shetland in March-April 1992, first record since 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 528-529). POLAND Vagrant: female on 21st March 1990 (only third record since 1983; *Notatki Orn.* 33: 119).

Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus* DENMARK First record: Jydelejet, Mon, on 28th-29th April 1993* (presumed escape).

Black-and-white Warbler *Amniotilta varia* ICELAND Second record: 19th-20th October 1991 (*Bliki* 13: 41).

Northern Parula *Parula americana* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 530).

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* GREAT BRITAIN Third record: first-winter male on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 24th August 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 530).

Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca* ICELAND First record: immature female found exhausted on a trawler at about 66°50'N, 21°25'W (about 40 nautical miles off northwest Iceland) in autumn 1987 (*Bliki* 8: 43).

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* ICELAND Eighth record: 13th October 1991 (*Bliki* 13: 41).

Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia citrina* GREAT BRITAIN Second record: St Kilda, Western Isles, on 10th September 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 530).

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* GREAT BRITAIN First and second records: Suffolk in June-July 1981 and Norfolk in May 1991, both accepted for Category A (1981 record previously included in Category D; *Brit. Birds* 86: 530-531).

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* GIBRALTAR First record: adult on 18th-25th May 1986 (cf. Dark-eyed Junco, below; *Ardeola* 39: 82).

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* GIBRALTAR
First record: adult on 18th-25th May 1986 (cf. White-throated Sparrow, above; *Ardeola* 39: 82). GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: May 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 531).

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: two in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 531).

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* MOROCCO
Influx (tenth to twelfth records): along Atlantic coast, two or three north of El-Jadida on 31st December 1992*, five or six at Oued Ksob, just south of Essaouira, on 2nd March 1993*, with two still there on 13th May 1993*, and flock of 18 near Anefgou in High Atlas on 17th July 1993*.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* AUSTRIA First confirmed breeding since 1938: two pairs in 1989 and three pairs in 1990 (*Egretta* 34: 73-85).

Yellow-throated Bunting *Emberiza elegans* FRANCE Second record and third for Western Palearctic: male on Ouessant, Finistère, on 13th-18th April 1993* (origin doubtful; cf. male in Finland, considered to be escape, in April 1991, *Brit. Birds* 86: 47).

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* ICELAND

Third record: 28th-29th October 1991 (*Bliki* 13: 41).

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* CANARY ISLANDS Second record: male on Alegranza islet, north of Lanzarote, in May 1993*. ESTONIA Fifth record: adult male at Saue, Harju District, on 16th and 30th May 1992.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* DENMARK Fourth record: male at Skagen, N-Jutland, on 10th June 1993*.

Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys* GREAT BRITAIN Third record: North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 22nd-23rd September 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 534).

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* ICELAND Second record: immature male on 20th October 1985, at nearly same time as the one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, Ireland (*Bliki* 6: 66; *Brit. Birds* 79: 585; 85: 552; *Irish Birds* 3: 331).

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: September 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 536).

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater* GREAT BRITAIN First record: male on Islay, Strathclyde, on 24th April 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 536).

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No information was received from Albania, Moldova, Romania or Switzerland.



Twenty-five years ago...

'When the British Trust for Ornithology was founded 37 years ago, one of its main aims was the encouragement of co-operative research by amateur ornithologists. This far-sighted move was made at a time when amateurs were few (the Trust's initial membership was 165) and the professional contribution extremely small. Now the Trust has a membership of over 4,200 and a professional staff which includes 14 ornithologists . . .' (*Brit. Birds* 62: 1, January 1969)

On 4th January, 1969, the late Reg Wagstaffe discovered the wing of an Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus* among flotsam and jetsam on the tideline at Formby, Lancashire, but the species had to wait another four years before being admitted to the British and Irish List.

A golden plover: but which one?

Graham P. Catley, R. A. Hume
and the Rarities Committee



On 7th September 1983, R. W. Gibling and Mrs J. Gibling, visiting the area from London, watched and photographed a strange wader at Salt-house, Norfolk. It was subsequently submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee as a 'Lesser Golden Plover' *Pluvialis dominica dominica* (now known as American Golden Plover *P. dominica*). The record was ultimately rejected as uncertain, but the discussion that ensued was instructive.

JG believed she had found a Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* and fetched RWG to look at it, on the far side of a pool west of the beach road. RWG agreed that it looked like a juvenile Dotterel, having a prominent supercilium, but also noted an upright impression, a long neck and long legs. The bird fed with a rapid run-stop-pick action, interspersed with short, low flights towards the observers: RWG was taking photographs during this time before the bird suddenly flew off out of sight towards Kelling. As it flew, it called a 'disyllabic "tuitt" reminiscent of Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*, but less sibilant and either louder or clearer. Used repetitively'. On taking flight—in alarm?—it uttered a more rapid version.

When RWG saw his photographs, he considered the possibility of other species. Having realised that Dotterel should have shown a breast band, and now seeing features that were not noted in the field in the effort to get photographs, RWG and JG concluded that Lesser Golden Plover was the correct identification.

The photographs submitted were four small colour prints, with images of the bird up to 3 cm long, all somewhat soft and slightly grainy and all showing the bird with its legs and feet all or partly hidden in vegetation. Each photograph (e.g. plate 2) shows a neat, apparently small-headed, slender-billed, cold-coloured golden plover *Pluvialis* at rest, in a three-quarter side view. This angle of vision appears to have exaggerated an apparently long extension of the closed primaries beyond the tail. The head and breast of the plover are mostly shown against gleaming silvery water and the forehead, chin and foreneck are all slightly 'lost' against that background, emphasising the apparent slimness of the head and neck, while the bill is clearly silhouetted in two, but rather soft, blurred in a third, and invisible in the smaller fourth image.

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What, then, was the mystery bird? On first circulation (11th February to 13th July 1984) it received four 'Accept' votes, three 'Rejects' and three 'Pends' for further expert views.

'Good' points noted were: slim shape, tapered rear, thin neck topped by prominent head, erect posture, large dark eye contrasting with pale face, and rather fine bill. The large eye and fairly well-defined supercilium were quoted as good features ruling out European Golden Plover *P. apricaria* and the call was well described for a 'Lesser' even when the bird was thought to be a Dotterel.

Points against (or easily 'explained') included: slim neck (due to alarm posture); leg length, wing/tail relationship and underwing all missing; bill more like European's in some voters' view; lack of prominent blackish cap; supercilium too diffuse (looking white, but so does much of the face in the pictures); lack of good dark ear-covert blob; underpart markings longitudinal rather than cross-bars; nothing at all on plumage to indicate other than European Golden. The small bill could be a trick of the photograph (a dark shape slightly out of focus against a light background) and, while the call and Dotterel-like look sounded good, there was the observers' lack of experience with any of the related rarer species to be taken into account, too.

A further complication arose, however, since some 'accepters' thought that this was not *dominica* but *fulva* (Pacific Golden Plover), because the cap did look prominent enough, the supercilium is less prominent on *fulva* than on *dominica*, the ear-covert blob was actually quite obvious and the general colour (too brown for *dominica*?) was perfect for *fulva*. Also, compared with photographs of *fulva* it looked spot-on, too long-necked and thin-necked for European Golden and lacking a contrasting dark breast band/pale belly effect. Assuming that it was a 'Lesser' at all, then *fulva* seemed the best bet. This seemed to be the way the voting would swing.

Independent expert opinion from Tony Pym cast a cloud on this view, suggesting that it was *dominica* after all. A second circulation with even longer comments was inevitable.

The referee's view was not readily accepted by the Committee. It seemed that the dark areas on the upperparts were not so dominant as on a juvenile (or at least an October juvenile) *dominica*, which usually shows an almost unmarked dark 'saddle' and whitish spots scattered on a dark background on the coverts, while *fulva* is more densely and uniformly peppered with yellowish-white (light and dark equally balanced). The photographic evidence was deemed to be somewhat deficient in yellow hues (too much pink, not enough green), so the apparent lack of yellowness could be illusory. The photographs, indeed, were questionable as evidence because individual birds can appear quite different on several photographs according to light and shade, the lens and film used, processing and printing.

The head pattern, however, still looked to some voters like that of *dominica*, with a well-defined dark cap and a pale, well-defined supercilium. The 'small' bill may have been a photographic trick, but the bill of 'Lessers' is in any case longer than on Golden, although looking slender and pointed: the apparent slimness surely favoured 'Lesser'? Not all voters agreed.

The long wingtips, long thigh, large eye and slim neck all favoured 'Lesser'

and could not all be illusory it was argued. Flocks of Goldens studied days before never once included a bird so long-necked as this, stated members.

It still did not convince everyone: the neck of a fully alert, lone, newly arrived European Golden could be stretched long and thin perhaps? And might it not even call oddly, too?

Some voters, previously convinced, now began to doubt the wisdom of acceptance on essentially questionable photographic evidence and without at least a good view of the underwing. Even some photographs of *fulva* used in comparison were drawn into question as perhaps themselves of misidentified birds.

The second circulation ended with five 'Accepts' and five 'Rejects'. It was to come around again, with other files available for comparison.

By now, of course, the make-up of the Committee had changed. New blood entered the fray! Well-fed winter flocks of European Goldens, which we are all used to seeing, are not, it was suggested, the best birds for comparative purposes: the slim, raised neck might be matched by European Golden after a long flight, atypical or not. The plumage features were judged to be quite compatible with *fulva*, not compatible with *dominica*, but not certainly ruling out *apricaria* on the evidence available. Nevertheless, the length of tibia ('thigh'), delicate appearance, dark crown, well-marked supercilia, narrow eye-line running back from the eye, and vertical spot on the lower rear ear-coverts, long wings and rather scaled look to the scapulars and wing-coverts all looked good for 'Lesser' and, given the remarkably good call, it still added up to an acceptable record for some members of the Committee. The debate ended with three acceptances and seven rejections, and the recommendation that the report be brought forward in a few years' time for review, should there be more knowledge of the species concerned.



2. Golden plover *Pluvialis*, Salthouse, Norfolk, September 1983 (R. W. Gibling)



3. Adult American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* completing moult into winter plumage, St Lucia, November 1985 (Don Smith)



4. Juvenile/first-winter Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Hong Kong, October 1987 (Ray Tipper)

5. Juvenile European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* moulting to first-winter plumage, Anglesey, October 1987 (R. J. Chandler)



There the matter rested until the autumn of 1992, when the file was unearthed as part of a 'Lesser Golden Plover' review. GPC undertook extensive study of European Golden Plovers in the field and commented at length on them and the bird in question. The remainder of this paper is based on his notes and views.

It was, above all, a good reminder that the real thing is better than any photograph and that close study of commoner confusion species is essential, especially as identification papers tend to reproduce few photographs of the commoner bird amongst many of the rarer options. GPC particularly studied *apricaria* in September: the month of the Salthouse claim. One in particular, a single bird keeping apart from a flock of 525, sounded alarm bells: it was 'odd', but never quite odd enough to suggest *fulva*, although it did raise the possibility of confusion. Indeed, while at the identification conference on Texel, Netherlands, the previous year, GPC had heard Californian delegates, seeing *apricaria* in flocks for the first time, expressing concern over the close similarity of non-summer-plumage European Golden and Pacific Golden and the very real difficulty of identifying a lone individual in such a plumage.

GPC took the points raised in the Salthouse file one by one:

1. General appearance, long-necked, long-legged, with upright stance and small head on long neck. The *apricaria* studied *could* match this. Juveniles tend to look smaller-headed, with a more 'waisted' neck than adults in the same flock. It is, however, not clear why this should be so.
2. Length of neck and small head. Alarmed golden plovers of all three species can raise their head and neck in alarm, and *apricaria* can match the bird photographed at Salthouse. Likewise, *fulva* can look quite dumpy when well fed and resting.
3. Leg length. The one photograph showing the tibia length well reveals an apparently very long thigh: *apricaria* juveniles showed very little unfeathered tibia. This is arguably the best point in favour of *fulva* for the Salthouse claim.
4. Bill shape/size. The bill of *fulva* can look large and generally has a bulbous tip, but this is not always apparent in photographs.
5. Head pattern. The forepart of the head is badly 'burnt out' or over-exposed and looks simply white, so there is no possibility of a critical assessment of the forehead, loreal or superciliary patterns. Juvenile *apricaria* may usually have dense, fine streaks on the forecrown, leaving the area around the loreal spot and the chin as the only really pale areas on the 'face' (contrasting with streaked malars/forecrown/ear-coverts). This can be shown by some juvenile *fulva*, although many look pale-fronted like *dominica*. The photographs in question make judgment impossible on this point.
6. Flank pattern. It was said that *apricaria* had streaked, not barred, flanks in one Committee comment, but all three species have an identical flank pattern in fresh juvenile plumage, with pale creamy-brown feather centres forming vertical bars down the flanks. Most *apricaria* seem to moult/wear in this area in winter, but there is remnant barring on some in February: the feature is irrelevant to the identification argument.
7. Wing length. This cannot be seen clearly. Even if it could, juvenile *apricaria* has an identical structure to *fulva*, with three exposed primaries beyond the tertials and the wingtip falling at or just beyond the tail tip (the structure is a valuable point in separating *fulva* from *dominica*, of course).
8. Large dark eye. Equally a feature of *apricaria*.
9. Contrast between upper breast and lower underparts. This is often obvious on adults, but juvenile *apricaria* do not match this pattern and can be identical to *fulva*.
10. Call. The most obvious feature in favour of *fulva* in the Salthouse claim, but calls can, of course, be atypical, and can be transcribed in ways that may be misinterpreted by others.



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In the end, the Salthouse claim must fail because of a lack of real detail in the observed features, in particular a lack of any description of the clinching underwing pattern, but that is no fault of the observers in this case. Even with such a 'good' call and such long legs, a bird like this falls short of any 100%-reliable identification but it could have been as claimed, nonetheless. After reading a draft of this paper, RWG has commented 'My view after all this time is that the bird most favoured *fulva*, was probably not *dominica*, but could have been a highly atypical *apricaria* (even though I've not managed to see another which seemed as cerily different).'

The present paper is offered as a useful discussion of golden plover identification, but it also serves to remind readers that an entry in the 'records rejected' list at the end of an annual 'Report on rare birds' is by no means a statement that a mistake had been made. As we always point out, it can simply be that, on the evidence presented, the identification was not incontrovertibly established. It also illustrates the amount of work that the Rarities Committee may be involved in during the assessment of a single report.

Graham P. Catley, 13 West Acridge, Barton-on-Humber, North Lincolnshire DN18 5AJ
R. A. Hume, 15 Cedar Gardens, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1EF



Photographic requirements

Photographs needed please For forthcoming papers, we need original colour transparencies, colour prints or black-and-white prints of the following species:

- Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (ID, all plumages)
- Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (ID, all ages)
- American Golden Plover *P. dominica* (ID, all ages)
- Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus* (Lundy and elsewhere)
- Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (adult summer)
- Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* (worn adult in the field in autumn)
- Booted Warbler *H. caligata* (worn adult in the field in autumn)
- Olive-tree Warbler *H. olivetorum* (worn adult in the field in autumn)
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Pollutants in Great Bitterns

I. Newton, I. Wyllie and A. Asher

Within its localised reed-bed habitat, the Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* has declined in Britain in recent decades, even though its main breeding haunts are protected as reserves (Day & Wilson 1978; Smith & Tyler 1993). The reasons for the decline are not well understood, so any information on possible contributing factors seems worth examining. As Great Bitterns eat fish, they are likely to accumulate certain pollutants, notably organochlorine-pesticide and mercury residues, which are known to have caused population declines of other raptorial and fish-eating birds (Ratcliffe 1970; Newton 1979; Risebrough 1986). In this paper, we report the levels of organochlorines and mercury that were found in the livers of 18 Great Bitterns picked up dead in Britain during the period 1963-92, and received for analysis at Monks Wood. Not all of them were necessarily of British origin, as some may have been immigrants from the Continent (Bibby 1981).

Procedure

On receipt, each bird was subjected to a post-mortem examination, the findings from which were used, along with the analytical results, to try and ascertain the cause of death. Part of the liver was removed and analysed for residues of pp'-DDE (derived from the insecticide DDT), HEOD (from the insecticides aldrin and dieldrin), PCBs (industrial polychlorinated biphenyls, analysed from 1967 only) and Hg (mercury, from both industrial and agricultural sources, from 1972 only). Analytical methods were as described by Newton *et al.* (1993) and, following the usual convention, organochlorine concentrations were expressed as parts per million (ppm) on a wet-weight basis, and mercury as ppm on a dry-weight basis. The minimum detectable levels for organochlorines were about 0.01 ppm in wet weight, and for mercury 0.01 ppm in dry weight.

Results

The 18 Great Bitterns received were found dead in various English counties, mostly in the southeast, and mostly in the period December to March (table

1). Twelve were males and six were females. Three had been shot, while the deaths of seven were attributed to collisions, four to starvation, one to disease (diagnosed on veterinary inspection as tuberculosis) and one to HEOD poisoning. For the remaining two individuals the cause of death was unknown, but one died after some weeks in captivity. The body weights of four starved males were recorded as 600, 602, 674 and 702 g, compared with 974 g for one shot male. The body weights of females were recorded as 611 g for the diseased bird and 1,133 g for a collision victim. No weights were obtained from the remaining birds. In so far as they are comparable, the weights of these birds were similar to those noted by Bibby (1981).

All 18 Great Bitterns were checked for pesticide residues (table 1). Sixteen had detectable residues of DDE and 14 had detectable residues of HEOD. The most notable was one found near Skegness, Lincolnshire, in October 1963, which contained nearly 19 ppm HEOD in its liver. The death of this bird was attributed to HEOD because this concentration was well within the range of HEOD values found in other birds known to have died of HEOD poisoning (13-46 ppm in various owls, Jones *et al.* 1978; 6-99 ppm in Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* and 5-85 ppm in Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus*, Newton *et al.* 1992), and because the carcass was in good condition and revealed no other obvious cause of death.

Of the 15 examined for PCBs, ten contained detectable residues, mostly at relatively low levels (table 1). Of the eight birds examined for mercury, all contained residues, some at high level. The three highest levels (34-95 ppm) were in those which had starved. As is usual with starved birds, their body fat

Table 1. Pollutant residues and other details for Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* in Britain found dead and examined during 1963-93

Residues of HEOD, DDE and PCBs are expressed as ppm in wet weight, and of Hg (mercury) as ppm in dry weight. NA = Not analysed; ND = Analysed but not detected. *Caught in a weak state, and died after 8 weeks in captivity. †Associated with a broken wing

Sex	Month & year	Locality	Presumed cause of death	HEOD	DDE	PCB	Hg
Male	Oct. 63	Skegness, Lincolnshire	Poisoning	18.7	4.1	NA	NA
Male	Dec. 63	Hickling, Norfolk	Unknown*	ND	2.2	NA	NA
Female	Dec. 64	Alvecote, Warwickshire	Shot	0.2	0.4	NA	NA
Male	Jan. 68	Ludham, Norfolk	Unknown	0.2	17.0	10.0	NA
Female	Mar. 68	Fowlmere, Cambridge	Collision	0.7	0.6	1.0	NA
Male	Nov. 71	Horsey, Norfolk	Shot	ND	2.4	ND	NA
Male	Feb. 72	Upwood, Cambridge	Shot	ND	2.4	ND	NA
Female	Mar. 72	Manca, Cambridge	Disease	2.6	3.1	4.6	NA
Female	Mar. 72	Seasalter, Kent	Collision	0.4	4.5	ND	NA
Female	Dec. 72	Isle of Man	Collision	1.4	0.9	ND	NA
Male	Dec. 85	West Runton, Norfolk	Collision	0.3	1.4	2.1	6.3
Male	Jan. 86	Shouldham, Norfolk	Collision	0.2	2.2	1.2	26.3
Male	Feb. 86	Titchwell, Norfolk	Starvation	0.1	ND	ND	57.8
Male	Apr. 86	Rostherne, Cheshire	Starvation	0.6	6.2	2.7	94.8
Male	Mar. 90	Wigan, Lancashire	Collision	ND	ND	0.1	9.8
Male	Jan. 92	Whitham, Essex	Starvation	0.1	5.7	2.8	33.9
Male	Oct. 92	Holkham, Norfolk	Starvation†	0.1	0.1	0.1	10.9
Female	Feb. 93	Roydon, Essex	Collision	0.1	0.3	0.5	19.2

was sparse and their livers were shrunken, so all pollutant concentrations may have been inflated above the normal level.

Discussion

Although based on a small sample, these findings are sufficient to confirm that Great Bitterns in recent decades have been contaminated with residues of organochlorine pesticides, PCBs and mercury. At least one of the 18 examined is likely to have died of HEOD poisoning. It was one of only five Great Bitterns received in the 1960s, when the use of aldrin and dieldrin was still high. Residues of DDE and PCBs were relatively low and, by analogy with other species (Cooke *et al.* 1982; Newton *et al.* 1992), are unlikely to have caused deaths during this period.

The levels of mercury found in some of the Great Bitterns were high. Among many bird species, such concentrations could have caused death (Borg *et al.* 1969), but the Great Bitterns with high levels appeared to have died of other causes. For all the chemicals, the range of concentrations found in Great Bitterns was well within the range found in 689 Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* from Britain, examined over the same period (Newton *et al.* 1993). Many Grey Herons contained more than 100 ppm mercury, but, like the Great Bitterns, had apparently died of other causes. The two species are closely related (classed in the same family) and have similar feeding habits. Perhaps both are also unusually resistant to mercury.

Because much more mercury has been used in Britain in industrial processes than in agriculture (Anon. 1976), and major emissions are associated with industrial processes, industry is likely to have provided a major source of residues for both species. Contamination of these birds may have been enhanced by the fact that, in aquatic systems, inorganic mercury can be converted by microbial action to methyl-mercury, the first crucial step in bioaccumulation (Bisogni & Lawrence 1973; Lindberg *et al.* 1987). The industrial uses and disposal of mercury have, however, been more rigorously controlled in recent years, and agricultural uses have also been reduced (Anon. 1964). In Grey Herons, residues of mercury declined substantially over the period considered (Newton *et al.* 1993), but too few Great Bitterns were obtained and analysed to examine any possible trends shown by this species.

Similarly, the one likely fatality from HEOD poisoning recorded here occurred as long ago as 1963. The legal use of DDT, aldrin and dieldrin in Britain was ended from about 1986, so any risk from these particular chemicals is likely to decline further. In conclusion, these findings confirm that Great Bitterns in Britain have been exposed to several potentially damaging pollutants, and can accumulate some of them to high levels. Any impact such chemicals might have had is likely to have declined over the years.

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Dr I. Newton, I. Wyllie and Mrs A. Asher, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Monks Wood, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE 17 2LS



Request

Dark-rumped petrels For a forthcoming paper on unidentified dark-rumped petrels, Stephen Morrison would like to receive all records of these enigmas seen in the northeast Atlantic. Details required should include at least the following: location and date of sighting, time and duration of sighting, distance from the bird, elevation and direction of viewing (whether from land or from vessel), optical aids used, weather and sea conditions, other pelagic species seen on the same day (please mention anything unusual about occurrence, numbers, etc.), and description of the bird to include as much detail as possible on plumage, flight pattern, habits and structure, with sketches or photographs if available. Please send records to S. Morrison, c/o 9 Holt Road, Branksome, Poole, Dorset BH12 1JQ.



The new Breeding Bird Survey

John H. Marchant

How are the numbers of British nesting birds changing? Where should we look for the reasons for upward or downward population trends? Is there anything we can do to influence those trends? Every birdwatcher should be aware that these are vitally important issues for British birds and their conservation: they concern our day-to-day observations of birds, our future prospects for enjoying birdwatching as a hobby and, most importantly, the welfare of the birds themselves. Spring 1994 will bring a far-reaching change to the way these issues are addressed.

Keeping track of bird populations

Around 220 species of birds breed regularly in Britain. Changes in numbers of the rarest are logged in these pages by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel and its contributors. The conservation value of this information is obvious: even a small numerical decrease—perhaps preventable—could spell disaster for the species in this country. For common and widespread species, the need for monitoring may be less clear, until we consider that these are the birds that would be most sorely missed were they to disappear from the British countryside: Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos*, and the several small farmland species that are also presently in decline, have undoubtedly given more pleasure to more people than any RBBP species. The ups and downs of species such as Magpie *Pica pica* and Song Thrush affect far more sites and far more people, as well as millions more individual birds, than those of, say, Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax* and Redwing *T. iliacus*.

Monitoring of common species requires an approach based not on complete counting, as is feasible for the rarities, but on sampling. The national base of the BTO, and its tradition of membership participation in surveys, suit it uniquely to this kind of work. Our Common Birds Census began in 1962 and has been monitoring breeding-bird numbers on farmland and in woodland now for three complete decades. Since 1974, the Waterways Bird Survey (WBS) has supplemented the CBC with counts of waterside species from rivers



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and canals. In these surveys, observers use the territory-mapping method to assess the numbers of birds breeding on defined plots or waterway stretches. Their great success can be attributed to the hundreds of observers whose imagination has been taken by bird-censusing, and to the funding supplied through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Evidence of this success is provided by the BTO/NCC book *Population Trends in British Breeding Birds* (1990), which documents changes in population size detected particularly by the CBC and the WBS up to 1988. Increasingly now, integration of these results with BTO data on nesting success (from the Nest Record Scheme) and rates of mortality (from bird-ringing) is showing us whether changes in any particular part of the life-cycle are linked to the trends we see in population size.

Population Trends also set out for the first time the strengths and weaknesses of the way in which the CBC and the WBS operate. The strengths are undeniable: CBC/WBS represents one of the most valuable long-term datasets in the field of natural history. There are, however, two major reasons why it cannot provide a reliable and complete measure of national changes in bird population size. First, only certain habitats (farmland, woodland, waterways) are covered, omitting others, such as moorland and urban areas, which are often rich in birds. Large sections of the populations of species such as Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*, House Martin *Delichon urbica* and Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* are excluded. Secondly, census plots are unevenly distributed geographically and in terms of habitat type within the categories. Census plots are mostly in the south and east of Britain: monitoring is poor, therefore, for species such as Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* and Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

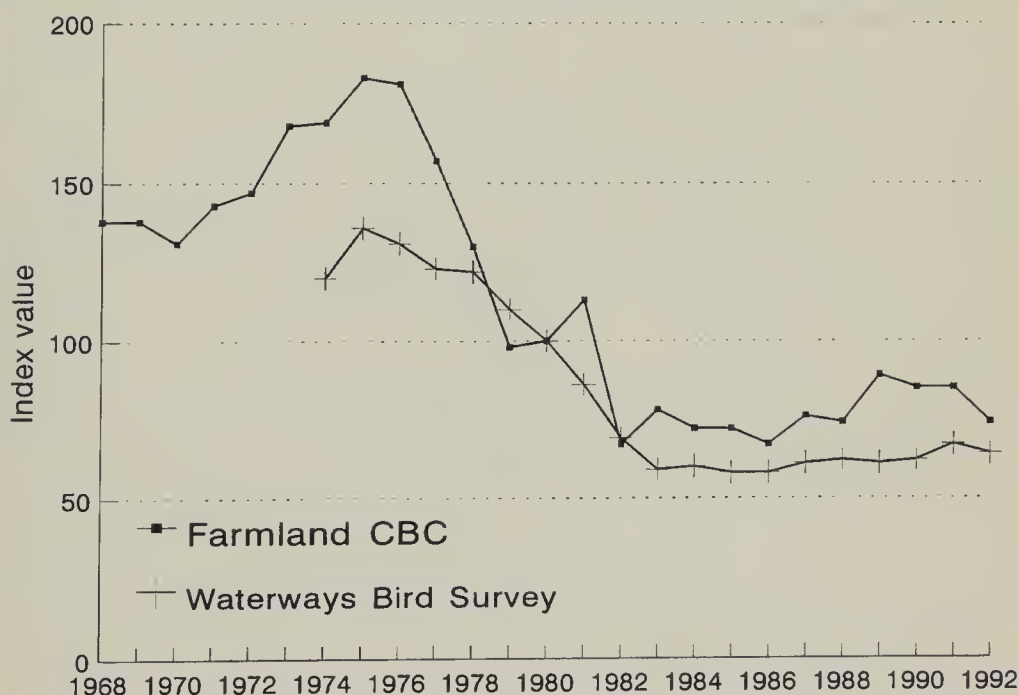


Fig. 1. Population changes of Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* during 1968-92 indicated by population index values (relative to an arbitrary 100 in 1980) from farmland Common Birds Census and Waterways Bird Survey plots. This species is one of several small seed-eating species of farmland which have recently undergone serious declines. The new BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey will increase the scope and representativeness of future monitoring of common birds

which are found mainly in the north and west. Since the census plots are selected by the observers themselves, the representativeness of the samples is open to question, even within regions and habitat types where the CBC/WBS is well supported.

Since 1987, the BTO has been engaged in tests and trials of potential new methods of gathering census data, to examine ways in which monitoring samples could be made truly representative of national or regional populations of birds. These culminated in the Pilot Census Project 1992-93. The outcome is a new scheme, the Breeding Bird Survey, to be launched this spring, 1994, as a joint BTO/JNCC/RSPB project. The collaboration between these three bodies illustrates the vital importance which is being given to this new survey for bird conservation in the United Kingdom. The BBS will run initially alongside a full-scale CBC and WBS, to see how the results compare.

The Breeding Bird Survey is launched

The most important new element of the BBS is random selection of the census sites. Randomisation will ensure that the monitoring sample is truly representative, and one from which unquestionable conclusions can be drawn about whole populations. The BTO has used this approach before in its surveys, but BBS is the first monitoring scheme anywhere in the world to have properly randomised sampling.

A second major innovation, at least in British terms, is a census method that will be much quicker and simpler than the mapping method as used by the CBC and the WBS: maps of territory distribution are 'overkill' when the aim is purely to monitor national or regional population change. Over the years, we have been contacted by many would-be participants who, in the end, have been put off by the time required to carry out a mapping CBC or WBS. We hope very much that the greater accessibility of the BBS will harness both goodwill towards the aims of population-monitoring and the ever-increasing reservoir of birdwatching skills to bring about a manyfold increase in participation in this important aspect of bird study and conservation. There were over 300 plots in the Pilot Census, and it is our aim to have at least 1,000 participants in the BBS during 1994, building up to even more than that in subsequent years.

Contribution to any survey adds practical and lasting value to the enjoyment of a day's birdwatching. The BBS will require just three fieldwork visits during April to June, each taking around 90 minutes to complete. Are *you* willing to join in with this new survey? Please tell your BTO Regional Representative, if you are in contact, or Steve Carter or myself at BTO headquarters in Thetford. We would also be very pleased to hear from you if you can help with other BTO surveys, especially the ongoing CBC and WBS, which need as much support as ever.

John H. Marchant, British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU



Monthly marathon

In this competition, you could win a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday of your choice, in America, Africa or Asia. Just identify the bird each month and add up your scores when you are correct. The first person to reach a total of 500 will win. (Please read the full rules, below.)

The bird taking off from the bush (86: plate 223) was named by competitors as Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* (47%), Siberian Jay *Perisoreus infaustus* (19%), Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Phoebastria ludovicianus* (17%), Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* (7%), Woodchat Shrike *L. senator* (5%), and also by a few people as Masked Shrike *L. nubicus*, Semicollared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata*, Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator* and Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus* (with one vote for the non-West-Palearctic White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carnipes*).

It was a Grey Grey Shrike, photographed by Kevin Hughes in Hampshire in November 1982 (SCORE 53). If any competitors have correctly identified every photograph in this current marathon, they will have achieved a total score so far of 358.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.

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1. Only current individual subscribers to *British Birds* are eligible to take part. Entrants should give their name, address and *BB* reference number on their entry. Only one entry is permitted per person each month.
2. Entries must be sent by post, each one on a separate postcard, and be received at the *British Birds* Editorial Office (Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK14 3NJ) by the stated closing date. Every care will be taken, but, even if negligence is involved, no responsibility can be accepted for non-delivery, non-receipt or accidental loss of entries.
3. All *BB* subscribers are eligible, except members of the Editorial Board and staff of *British Birds*, Directors and members of staff of SUNBIRD/WINGS Holidays, and Directors and members of staff of our printers, Newnorth Print Ltd. (Members of *BB* Notes Panels, the Rarities Committee, and other voluntary contributors—including bird-photographers, even if one of their photographs is used in the competition—are eligible unless proscribed above.)
4. Each monthly 'hurdle' will carry a SCORE (equal to the percentage of entrants who got it wrong, so that the most difficult problems carry the highest scores); entrants accumulate their scores when they are right; the first person to reach a total of 500 (or with the highest score after 15 photographs) will win the competition.
5. In the event of two or more *BB* subscribers achieving a score of 500 simultaneously, the competition will continue each month until one of them (or someone else!) achieves a higher score than any other contestant.
6. In the event of any dispute, including controversy over the identity of any of the birds in the photographs, the decision of the Managing Editor of *British Birds* is final and binding on all parties.
7. No correspondence can be entered into concerning this competition.
8. The name and address of the winner will be announced in *British Birds*.



6. Sixth 'Monthly marathon'; twelfth stage: photo no. 91. Identify the species. *Read the rules* (see page 29), then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK11 3NJ, to arrive by 28th February 1994



Announcements

Bird Photograph of the Year This annual competition is once again sponsored by two long-standing friends of *British Birds*, the publishing firms Christopher Helm (Publishers) and HarperCollins.

Entrants should read the rules carefully (see *Brit. Birds* 84: 36, or write for a copy).

The judging panel will consist of Dr R. J. Chandler, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and Don Smith.

Past winners of this competition have been Michael C. Wilkes (1977), Peter Lowes (1978), Dr Edmund C. Fellowes (1979), Don Smith (1980), Richard T. Mills (1981), Dennis Coutts (1982), David M. Cottridge (1983), John Lawton Roberts (1984), C. R. Knights (1985), Alan Moffett (1986), Dr Kevin Carlson (1987), Bob Glover (1988 & 1992), Hanne Eriksen (1989 & 1990), Philip Perry (1991) and Alan Williams (1993).

The 1994 awards (cheque for £100 and engraved salver for the winner, cheques for £40 and £25 for the second and third, and £25-worth of HarperCollins books and £25-worth of Christopher Helm books for each of the top three photographers) will be presented at a Press Reception in London in May or June. The runners-up will be welcome to attend the award presentation. There is an additional award of £100 for the highest-placed photograph taken by an entrant aged under 21 years (please state date of birth if eligible), the 'Windrush Photos Award'.

The closing date for entries is 31st January 1994. Transparencies should be clearly marked 'Bird Photograph of the Year' and sent to Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

The PJC Award A handsome trophy, the PJC Award, is presented annually, in memory of the late Pauline Jean Cook, to the artist whose single drawing submitted for the 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition is selected by the judges for its individual merit. The holder of the PJC Award also receives an inscribed book as a permanent symbol of the achievement. The current holder is John M. Walters (*Brit. Birds* 80: 250-251; 83: 255-261; 84: 298-307; 85: 417; 86: 350-351).

Bird Illustrator of the Year This annual competition will again be sponsored by *Kowa* telescopes.

Amateur and professional artists are invited to submit four line-drawings for this competition. Entrants should read the rules very carefully (see *Brit. Birds* 84: 36-37, or write for a copy), especially in relation to the exact sizes required.

The judging panel will consist of Robert Gillmor, Alan Harris, Keith Shackleton and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.

The winner will receive £100, a *Kowa* TSN-3 20-60 × zoom telescope and an inscribed salver; the second-placed artist £40 and a TSN-1 20 × W *Kowa* telescope; and the third-placed artist £25 and a TS-601 20 × W *Kowa* telescope (all three telescopes with cases). All three artists will also be invited to attend the award presentation at a Press Reception at The Mall Galleries in London, where a selection of the drawings will be on display. All artists whose work is displayed will also be welcome to attend the reception, which in previous years has provided a very happy occasion for meeting many of our top bird artists. The winners' entries will also be displayed in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at The Mall Galleries.

Previous winners have been Crispin Fisher (1979), Norman Arlott (1980 & 1981), Alan Harris (1982), Martin Woodcock (1983), Bruce Pearson (1984), Ian Lewington (1985), Chris Rose (1986), David Quinn (1987), Martin Hallam (1988), John Cox (1989), Gordon Trunkfield (1990), John Davis (1991), John Gale (1992) and Richard Allen (1993).



Kowa
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The closing date will be 15th March 1994; entries should be sent to 'Bird Illustrator of the Year', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

The Richard Richardson Award To encourage young, up-and-coming bird artists, a special award (a cheque and a book to the total value of £60) will be presented for the best work submitted for the 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition (see above) by an artist aged under 21 years on 15th March 1994. The winner's entries will be displayed in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at The Mall Galleries. Previous winners have been Alan F. Johnston (1979), Andrew Stock (1980), Darren Rees (1981), Keith Colcombe (1982 & 1984), Gary Wright (1983), Ian Lewington (1985), Timothy Hinley (1986), Andrew Birch (1987), John Cox (1988), Stephen Message (1989), Anthony Disley (1990 & 1992), Andrew Birch (1991) and Peter Leonard (1991 & 1993). This award is in memory of the famous Norfolk ornithologist and bird-artist, the late R. A. Richardson. The rules for entry are exactly the same as for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and entries by persons under 21 will automatically be considered for both awards.

Front-cover designs for sale The original unframed drawings of the pictures on the front cover of *BB* are for sale each month in a postal auction. The pictures are usually 1½ or two times the published size. These sales help not only the artists, but also *BB*, since the artists donate 20% to the journal. It is also a way for *BB* readers to acquire—for themselves or as a present for a friend—top-class art at very reasonable prices. During the past year, successful postal bids have ranged from £55 to £135, and the average has been £89. Why not send in your bid each month? If you are successful (if your bid is the highest, and it exceeds the artist's reserve price) you will be asked to pay the sum you bid, plus £1.50 for postage and packing. Send your name, address and telephone number and your bid (no money at this stage), to arrive before the last day of the month, to Cover Bid, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Photographs and drawings may be for sale Many of the photographers and artists whose pictures appear in *British Birds* welcome the opportunity to sell their work. Anyone who wishes to obtain either photographic prints or original drawings is welcome to write (making an enquiry about availability, making an appropriate offer, or seeking the price) to the photographer or artist concerned, c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ. We shall forward all such letters, as a service to our readers and contributors.

'The Carl Zeiss Award' This award (see *Brit. Birds* 86: 622) aims to encourage the submission of potentially useful photographs to the Rarities Committee, to assist the process of individual record assessment, to increase the available reference material, and for possible publication. The sponsors, *Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd.*, are offering an annual prize of Carl Zeiss 10 × 40 B/GAT Dialyt or 7 × 42 B/GAT binoculars, and runners-up will receive high-quality sew-on woven badges featuring the Carl Zeiss Award logo.



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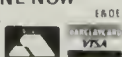
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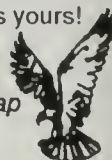
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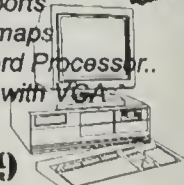
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Review

Wetlands in Danger. Edited by Patrick Dugan. Mitchell Beazley, London, 1993. 192 pages; 192 colour plates; many maps and figures. ISBN 1-85732-166-9. £19.99.

This is an inventory of all the World's wetlands, plus thorough explanation of their importance for human beings and for wildlife. But it must be the most exciting and wonderful inventory ever produced. The photographs of the wetlands themselves, covered both in close-up and from the air, are stunning, with the printing standard being beyond criticism. It is impossible to look at this book without the feelings of enchantment and wonder, and an overpowering desire to see these marvellous places retained for purely selfish reasons: our own pleasure.

Thus, this book, produced by the IUCN, should have an impact at least equal to that of *The Last Rain Forests* (Collins, 1990), which sold over a quarter of a million copies worldwide.

This is, however, not just a pretty book in which to browse (and to plan one's next foreign trip), but is filled with constructive maps and comprehensive, authoritative text.

Let us hope that *Wetlands in Danger* is seen not only by those such as ourselves who will appreciate it, but also by those who have the power to ensure that these places remain as natural filters, natural reservoirs and natural buffers, as well as wildlife havens.

Take a look at this book. You will probably have difficulty resisting the desire to buy it.

J. T. R. SHARROCK



PhotoSpot

35. Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*

Notorious as a short-stayer when it occurs in Britain, Red-flanked Bluetail is one of the most sought-after vagrants. A few breed as far west as Finland, but the range extends east to Japan, most overwintering in Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent. The handful of British records (just 11 prior to 1993) have mostly been in late September and October, the peak time for other eastern vagrants. This PhotoSpot feature celebrates the two in 1993: on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 15th-16th September and at Winspit, Dorset, from 30th October to 8th November.

In their breeding habitat (dense coniferous forests), Red-flanked Bluetails generally sing between midnight and dawn. Usually shy, they can be difficult to locate. In their winter quarters, where they are often but not always associated with streams, pools or other damp habitats, and on migration, however, Red-flanked Bluetails generally make themselves fairly obvious, and can be remarkably tame. Often perching low to the ground, the behaviour is reminiscent of that of the European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*.

The accompanying photographs were taken in and around Beidaihe, on the northeast coast of China, where Red-flanked Bluetails pass through on migration, mostly in April. The males migrate first, and passage is over by early May, except for the odd, straggling female.

DAVID TIPLING

99 Noah's Ark, Kemsing, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 6PD



7 & 8. Red-flanked Bluetails *Tarsiger cyanurus*: male (above) and female (below), China, April 1993
(David Tipling/Windrush Photos)





9-11. Male Red-flanked Bluetails *Tarsiger cyanurus*, China, April 1993 (above and below left); female, China, May 1993 (below right) (David Tipling/Windrush Photos)





Notes

Greylag Goose using feet to obtain food In spring 1990, during studies of staging Greylag Geese *Anser anser* in Floi, southern Iceland, we made continuous observations on individual pairs as they fed in hayfields. During the first half of April, temperatures rarely rose above freezing and the grass in the fields had hardly shown any growth.

On 16th and 18th April, we watched a female Greylag picking up hanks of dried vegetation, which she shook in an attempt to feed on the material; being unsuccessful in shaking off parts of the food, she then very deliberately dropped it and proceeded to paddle upon it with her feet, feeding on material thereby dislodged. This same female was seen to use this behaviour on at least four occasions. On one occasion, the male, which normally fed or stood vigilantly close by the female, came across to feed on the material broken up by his mate.

There do not appear to be any accounts in the literature of grey geese of the genus *Anser* using their feet to assist in feeding.

STEPHANIE WARREN and A. D. FOX

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Division of Wildlife Ecology, National Environmental Research Institute,
Køge, Gjenåvej 12, DK-8410 Ronde, Denmark

Ageing and sexing of King Eiders The note by Dr R. J. Chandler (*Brit. Birds* 80: 626-627; plates 326 & 327) entitled 'Identification and ageing of first-winter male King Eider' is misleading. I have observed King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis* in a variety of plumages in Scotland in most years since 1975 and would make the following comments on Dr Chandler's note.

The bird in his plate 326 (and plate 12 here), 'First-winter male King Eider', shows broad white tips to the greater coverts and secondaries, and a pale head and breast contrasting with the rest of the body. It is, therefore, a female in at least her second winter. The white tips to the greater coverts are very broad, suggesting that she is probably even older. Juveniles and first-winters show only indistinct, narrow, slightly paler tips to the greater coverts and secondaries. Juveniles and first-winter females usually show darker heads and breasts, lacking the degree of contrast shown by the bird in the photograph.

The pale eye-ring and streak running downwards from behind the eye (shown well by the bird in plate 12) are not, as Dr Chandler said, specific to first-winter male King Eiders. They are, however, useful additional characters for separating female and juvenile King Eiders from Common Eiders *S. mollissima*, although their prominence varies greatly among individuals, and they can be difficult to see at long range or in dull light.

The ageing of male King Eiders in winter plumage is not too difficult. Males moult almost continuously during their first winter. From juvenile plumage, they undergo a partial body moult, replacing the feathers of the head, flanks, scapulars and breast, and appear basically sooty-black with a whitish breast, and the base of the bill becomes orange-yellow.

From this post-juvenile plumage they undergo further body moult into first-winter plumage, with individuals progressing at very different rates, some hardly moulting at all, whilst others attain an almost completely grey crown, white cheeks, white mantle and circular, white thigh patches. The enlargement of the bill-shield is also very variable, but most develop an obvious orange bill-shield and dusky-red bill. All, however, retain juvenile, mottled-brown bellies and juvenile wings with pale-tipped, brown upperwing-coverts. This process ends when they moult into first-summer (eclipse) plumage, when they appear sooty-brown with a mottled paler breast and sometimes a mottled paler mantle.

Second-winter male King Eiders differ from third-winter (adult) and older males principally in that the crown is a pale slate-grey, rather than powder-blue, the cheeks are whitish, rather than very pale green, the breast is whitish, lacking the pink flush of an adult, and the bill-shield is usually smaller and paler. They differ from exceptionally advanced first-winter males in having black bellies and at least partially white median coverts.

Males moulting from summer (eclipse) plumage to winter (breeding) plumage are more difficult to age. The individual in plate 327 of Dr Chandler's note (and plate 13 here) was labelled 'Male King Eider moulting from second-summer to second-winter plumage'; using the correct terminology, however, second-summer males moult into third-winter (adult) plumage (not second-winter). This bird has white median coverts and so must be at least a first-summer (eclipse) male moulting to second-winter plumage, as white median coverts are not attained until the second winter. The white median coverts appear to be well developed, so the bird could be older, but the description of the bill as yellow-orange suggests that it may be a first-summer moulting into second-winter plumage.

The photograph of the bird in the *Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding* (vol. 1, page 187) which Dr Chandler referred to as a 'second-year male' and which is captioned in the *Master Guide* as an 'immature male' is a juvenile male prior to attaining its black-and-white post-juvenile plumage.

When multiple records of King Eiders occur in areas such as Shetland and Grampian, correct ageing is useful in determining how many individuals are involved. I hope this note helps to clarify the situation.

PETE ELLIS

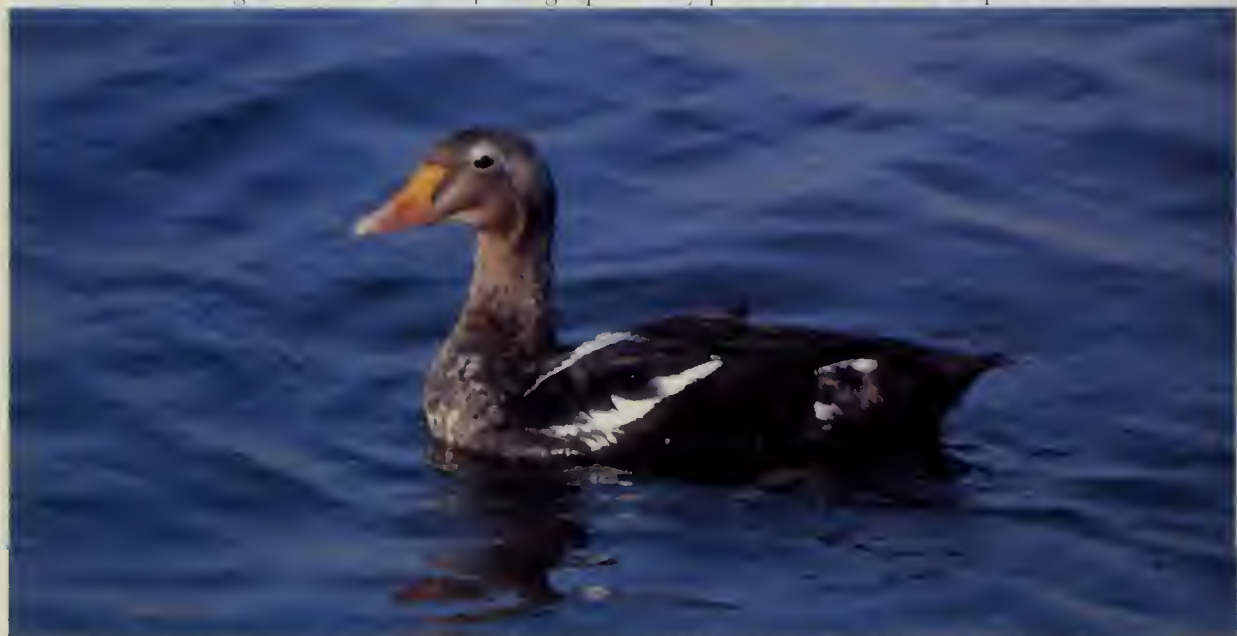
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We showed Pete Ellis's letter to Mrs Jane Dawson, who has provided the following detailed comments. EDS

I have been keeping and breeding King Eiders in captivity since 1971. The birds are individually colour-ringed. Although it may be that some species mature earlier in captivity because of better feeding, I do not feel that this is the case with seaducks as their diets change dramatically from season to season in the wild and no adequate substitute diets are available.



12 & 13. King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis*, New Jersey, USA, September 1985 (R. J. Chandler): above, second-winter (or older) female (previously published *Brit. Birds* 80: plate 326); below, first-summer male moulting into second-winter plumage (previously published *Brit. Birds* 80: plate 327)



14. Right, second-winter male King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*, showing black nape line (with adult male, behind), in captivity, Islay, Argyll, March 1990 (Jane Dawson) (see fig. 1)

15. Below, King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis* in captivity, Islay, Argyll, March 1990. Males in foreground: left, second-winter, right, third-winter; males in background: adults aged five years and seven years (ageable only by leg rings) (Jane Dawson)



I agree that the bird shown in plate 326/12 is a female King Eider, not only because of the white tips to the greater coverts and secondaries, but because a dark bill is present at the same time as prominent but rounded points on the mantle. The points are large enough to indicate a female in at least her second winter. Although young males show small rounded humps on the mantle in their first year, the bill by that time is already lightening to a pinkish colour. The presence or absence of white tips to the greater coverts and secondaries varies from one female to another and is not consistent with age. The pale eye-ring and stripe are acquired by downy young from as early as two weeks of age. By about September, these features have already faded and the bill colour is lightening to a pinkish colour. Although the pale eye-ring and stripe may continue to be shown by post-juvenile females, this feature is very variable on females of all ages. The plumage of a female in her second winter is indistinguishable from that of an older female, although there is a tendency to become paler around the head and neck with age.

I also agree that the male in plate 327/13 is probably coming out of his first-summer eclipse into his second-winter plumage. Although the bill-shield shrinks slightly on all eclipse males, the shape of this bird's bill-shield, along with the other features shown, is typical of a male approaching his second winter. It is worth noting that King Eiders are sexually mature by their second spring, not their third as is usually stated. If my own birds are going to breed, they have invariably done so at two years old. Throughout their first year, males progress at varying rates, with thigh patches enlarging, bill-shield increasing in size, and showing mottled grey on the head and mottled white on the mantle and median wing-coverts. Although, when initially emerging into second-winter plumage in November, some males may appear paler in colour about the head, bill and shield than older males, by February they begin pairing and resemble older males in all ways other than by two features. First, the bill-shield is slightly smaller than that of the third-winter male; secondly, a second-winter or second-summer male is easily identified by a thin black vertical line down the back of his head from crown to neck. I can find only two references to this dark nape line: Witherby *et al.* (1941) stated that it is



Fig. 1. Second-winter male King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*, showing black nape line (with adult male, behind), drawn from plate 14 (Robert Gillmor)

present on some males, and Palmer (1976), in his description of the adult male from October to December, stated 'HEAD nape, crown, and forehead pearl gray, palest anteriorly; nape feathers elongated (posteriormost sometimes tipped dark gray), forming rounded puffy crest.' Plate 14 and fig. 1 show this black nape line. Among my own King Eiders, I can also identify a third-winter male by his having a bill-shield fractionally smaller than that of a fourth-winter or older male. This is, however, visible only at very close range and by direct comparison; I should not like to have to judge them in the field.



16. Flock of King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis*, Svalbard, late June/early July 1971, showing males in various stages of moult (Rodney Dawson)

I wonder whether some of the confusion over maturity of male King Eiders results from the fact that first-winter males go into moult first, followed by males which have failed to breed, followed by breeding males. These last commence their moult as soon as their female has begun laying. Thus, in breeding areas by the last week in June, there will be males in various stages of moult, as shown in plate 16.

JANE DAWSON

Easter Ellister, Port Charlotte, Isle of Islay, Argyll

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- PALMER, R. S. 1976. *Handbook of North American Birds*. vol. 3. New Haven & London.
 WITHERBY, H. F., JOURDAIN, F. C. R., TICEHURST, N. F., & TUCKER, B. W. 1941. *The Handbook of British Birds*. vol. 3. London.

Red-legged Partridge sliding down plank The note on a Blackbird *Turdus merula* sliding down a roof (*Brit. Birds* 83: 208) recalled the following. At 06.15 GMT on 7th April 1982, in my garden at Pertenhall, Bedfordshire, I watched one of two Red-legged Partridges *Alectoris rufa* climb a 20-cm-wide plank which was resting at about 25° against a low fence. This it did with some difficulty, as the plank was wet from recent rain. When the partridge was about three-quarters of the way up, it turned and slid the 1.5 m to the ground, before walking away, looking to my mind distinctly 'sheepish'.

P. J. TIZZARD

Hillview, Linwood, Ringwood, Hampshire BH24 3QJ

Although this slide may have been accidental, the partridge could have fluttered down or flown away if it had not intended to descend by what was clearly the easiest method. EDS

Water Rails taking advantage of incoming tide when feeding On 7th September 1990, Jim Ward and I watched an adult and a juvenile Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* feeding at Janabiyah reeds, Bahrain, where a freshwater ditch runs into a small intertidal pool, which is dry at low tide. As the incoming tide started to fill the pool, and the water approached the fringing reeds *Phragmites*, the two Water Rails appeared, running around in a hurried manner, frequently changing direction while wading with long strides. The juvenile caught a small fish, ran to drier ground and swallowed it whole, then ran back to the water's edge to continue feeding. After a few minutes, as the water continued to rise, the rails withdrew into the reeds. When they first appeared, the adult showed aggression by chasing the juvenile, but as the tide came in the two fed alongside each other. Although fish are part of the normal diet of Water Rails (*BWP*, vol. 2), we found it of interest that these two were taking advantage of the incoming tide in this manner.

I thank Jim Ward for commenting on my English in an early draft of this note.

ERIK HIRSCHFELD

POB 2411, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

In some areas (e.g. the Dee Marshes, Cheshire), large numbers of Water Rails may frequent saltmarshes in winter and feed at the rising tide. EDS

Unusual plumage of male Grey Wagtail On 19th March 1993, whilst birding at Teba Gorge (Málaga province), Spain, I saw an unusually plumaged male Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*. The most notable and immediately striking features were the extension of the black bib down the ventral line of the body to the belly, as on Great Tit *Parus major*, and the very dark, almost black, head. The following description and drawings (fig. 1) are from notes made at the time over a period of about 40 minutes, when the bird, which was very active and feeding on the walls of the gorge, was intermittently in sight.

Head very dark slate grey, black when the bird was in strong shadow, and contrasting quite noticeably with normal medium bluish-grey of mantle. Supercilium reduced, being non-existent in front of eye and visible only behind eye, as on Iberian race of Yellow Wagtail *M. flava iberiae*. White moustachial stripe much reduced and present only on what would normally be lowest part,

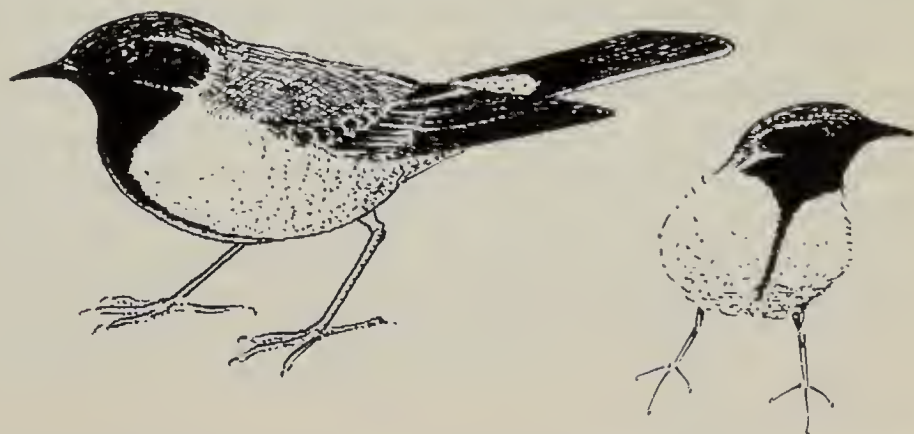


Fig. 1. Aberrant male Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, Spain, March 1993 (Andrew M. Paterson)

the dark grey cheeks and lores merging with black of throat. Most notable feature: extension of black 'bib' of throat down central line of breast to about middle of belly, about same width as that on female Great Tit. Rest of underbody, wing and tail plumage normal, although yellow of belly, ventral area, undertail-coverts and rump was brilliant.

I know of no cases of hybridisation of this species with any of the races of Yellow Wagtail, although this bird did show the reduced supercilium of *iberiae*, as well as a very dark (but not black) head reminiscent of *M. f. feldegg*.

ANDREW M. PATERSON

Edificio San Gabriel 2-4º-A, calle Escritor Adolfo Reyes, 29620 Torremolinos, Málaga, Spain

Dr Stephanie J. Tyler has commented: 'Andrew Paterson's Grey Wagtail is most unusual. The plumage of the nominate race and that of the eastern races (*melanope* and *robusta*) throughout their ranges are remarkably similar. The black chin and throat of the breeding male is usually sharply demarcated from the breast, although the supercilium may sometimes be so narrow as to be indistinct in front of the eye as in A. Paterson's bird. His bird calls to mind Grey Wagtails from Madeira (*schmitzi*) or the Azores (*patriciae*), which are habitually darker slate-grey above than *cinerea*, with the white supercilium reduced to just a narrow stripe behind the eye and with the white stripe of the lower cheeks narrow and indistinct (see *BWP*). These island birds are, however, so far as we know, non-migratory, so it is unlikely that the one in Málaga province was from Madeira or the Azores.

'I would also rule out its being a hybrid Grey × Yellow Wagtail because the behaviour, song and habitat of these two species are so different, and suggest that it was either a bird with aberrant plumage or partially melanistic.' EDS

Woodchat Shrike pursuing Hoopoe On 29th March 1990, in hotel gardens at Eilat, Israel, I saw an adult Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* silently pursue a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* in flight, in the manner of a skua *Stercorarius* chasing a tern *Sterna*. It remained within a few centimetres of the Hoopoe's tail as the two flew across a lawn and through a grove of tamarisks *Tamarix* at a height of between 5 and 10 m. The Hoopoe had a large grub in its bill, which the Woodchat was obviously attempting to acquire. Whether the shrike was successful I do not know, for the unlikely duo was quickly lost to view in the tamarisks.

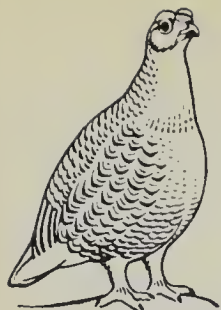
ALAN HARRIS

60 East Park, Harlow, Essex CM17 0SE

Common Ravens nesting beside Griffon Vultures In 1989, at the Montejo raptor reserve in the gorges of the Riaza, Segovia, Spain, a pair of Common Ravens *Corvus corax* fledged three chicks from a nest located next to a nest of Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus*, which also successfully reared their single chick. During 19 years of observation at these ravines, I had occasionally recorded nests of the two species placed very close together, but this was the first and only time that I observed them nesting in the same cavity of the crag, and practically side by side. The vultures' nest concerned had been used successfully in 1981, and was again in 1993. In 1988, the ravens had hatched three chicks in an old vultures' nest (used successfully by the latter species in 1978-81 and again in 1989, 1990, 1992 and 1993) on the same crag and very close to an active and successful nest of a pair of Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus*.

FIDEL JOSÉ FERNÁNDEZ Y FERNÁNDEZ-ARROYO

c/ Pensamiento, 15-3ª, 28020 Madrid, Spain



Letters

Norfolk listing County listing is of growing interest to many birders, even to some who keep no other bird list. Recently, Shetland has credited Dennis Coutts with a county total of 357 species and Dorset shows Martin Cade leading there with 336 species.

The current situation in Norfolk is that Giles Dunmore clearly leads the pack, on 357 species, four ahead of his nearest rival. The total list for Norfolk is 402 species (this includes six recent additions awaiting acceptance). Giles's total represents nearly 89% of the county total, and the combined effort of the top nine listers is over 91%. (Norfolk does not include feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*, but does include feral Greylag Goose *Anser anser*.)

I (and I am sure many others) would be interested in other counties naming their top lister, giving the list total, and expressing that list as a percentage of the county total. Cornwall (including Scilly) and 'Yorkshire' should be interesting, but I should also like to see the landlocked counties give their lists too. May the best county win!

DAVID HOLMAN

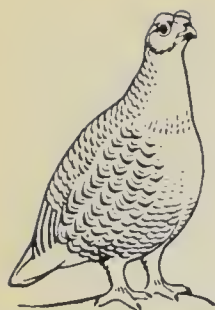
9 Salisbury Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 1TU

David Holman himself described this as 'a fairly flippant piece' and, as a piece of fun, we can see the interest. Are we staid and stodgy, however, in worrying that some less-mature birdwatchers might regard such listings as important, or that the county's top lister might be confused with the county's best or most-expert birdwatcher? How about lists of the birds each lister had *found and identified* himself/herself? That would sort out the real birdwatchers from those who merely rely on the expertise of others. Our comments should not be taken as criticism of those named above, for we suspect that Giles Dunmore and David Holman would both appear very high in the list of Norfolk's 'real birdwatchers'. EDS

Common Swifts roosting and nesting in trees Jan Holmgren's note (*Brit. Birds* 86: 368-369) drew attention to the rarity of observations of Common Swifts *Apus apus* roosting in trees. Two Surrey records may be of interest. One is in the *London Bird Report* (21: 28), where a Common Swift is reported as going to roost in an elm *Ulmus* at West Ewell on 1st August 1956. The other appeared in the *Surrey Bird Report* (34: 27) and concerns a pair of Common Swifts raising two young in a nest hole high in an elm at Thorpe in 1953. Neither of these was mentioned by Laek (1956, *Swifts in a Tower*).

JEFFERY J. WHEATLEY

6 Boxgrove Avenue, Guildford, Surrey GU1 1XG



New Canada Goose research

WHETHER WE LIKE THEM OR NOT, Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* are with us to stay; while they still have a long way to go before they catch up with the Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*, they have undoubtedly been very successful aliens (see *Brit. Birds* 86: 591-599). One result of this, and of their ability to live alongside man, has been that they have also achieved some notoriety as pests. They are alleged to cause damage to crops, and certainly make a nuisance of themselves in parks and various public open spaces. There are murmurings about dangers to human health, too.

Much of what has been said on these subjects about Canadas recently has been based more on guesswork than fact, so it is good to see that the Canada Goose Working Group, with Government funding, has commissioned new research into the subject, with particular emphasis on human-health risks and interaction with other species. It makes lots of sense for there to be a long-term management programme for this species which is based on good science: too much is said about so-called 'nuisance birds' which bears little relation to reality.

Mink problem

Minks *Mustela vison* have spread into Argyll and the southwest of Highland Region, and are causing havoc among breeding seabirds. The species affected are mainly Common Gulls *Larus canus*, sea-terns *Sterna*, Black Guillemots *Cepphus grylle*, Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* and Great Cormorants *P. carbo*.

Where minks are present, complete breeding failure is the norm, unless colonies are very large; where severe predation has been a feature for many years, colonies have even become extinct.

In a major article in *The Seabird Group's Newsletter* (66), appropriately entitled 'Notes from a War Zone', Clive Craik makes the point that, over a wide area, severe mink

predation amounts to a considerable environmental tragedy and one which most conservation bodies appear to be neglecting, although he does concede that there are rather large logistical problems in long-term trapping and killing on the scale that would be required to have any sort of impact. Nevertheless, it does seem to us that the problem deserves much closer examination.

In his editorial comments, Mark Tasker contrasts the relative inactivity of UK conservationists with those in South Africa, who have succeeded in ridding the remote, 30,000-ha Marion Island of over 3,000 feral cats, to the great benefit of seabirds and other wildlife.

Young Ornithologists of the Year

Sponsored as usual by *British Birds*, and judged by Peter N. Holden, Head of Youth and Volunteer Department at the RSPB, and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Managing Editor of 'British Birds', the winners and runners-up were as follows:

9 YEARS AND UNDER

1st Christine Murphy (7), Bristol

2nd Helen Wood (9), Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire

No third prize was awarded

Judges' comments: 'Christine's notebook contains very good and precise descriptions of behaviour. It is especially commendable since she is well below nine, the maximum age for this group.' (JTRS); 'Christine's book is particularly notable for its attention to detail.' (PNH).

10-12 YEARS

1st Tom Fieldsend (10), Hindolveston, Norfolk

2nd Jonathan Dean (11), St Andrews, Fife

3rd John McAulay (12), Broxburn, Lothian

Judges' comments: 'Tom's observations are very honest. When he couldn't identify something,

he made notes and said so, enabling him to check it in a field guide later.' (JTRS); 'There are lots of notes on behaviour in Tom's notebook, even of common birds which often get overlooked.' (PNH). Tom Fieldsend won the junior section in 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 237-238).

13 YEARS AND OVER

1st David Parnaby (16), Sunderland, Tyne & Wear

2nd Simon Patient (14), Maldon, Essex

3rd Kirsty Meadows (16), Dunstable, Bedfordshire

Judges' comments: 'David's notebook revealed his wide interest in all aspects of wildlife and an intelligent attitude towards conservation.' (JTRS); 'David is clearly not recording only for his own benefit, for he is passing his observations on to people who can make good use of them.' (PNH).

Both judges commented favourably on the high standard of artwork within the notebooks of the two runners-up in the senior section.

The prizes will, as usual, be presented at a special award ceremony at the RSPB's headquarters at The Lodge.

Timothy Andrews Memorial Hide

Tim Andrews was killed whilst birding in Peru (*Brit. Birds* 83: 515, 567; 84: 239), though the exact circumstances of his death may never be known. To commemorate Tim's passion for birding, his many friends have funded a hide in his memory. The hide has been erected overlooking the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife

Trust reserve at Rye Meads, Hertfordshire, where Tim's early interest in birds flourished within the local YOC group. The hide was officially handed over to the Trust at a short memorial service on 24th July 1993, and will be open to the public via the RSPB Rye House reserve. (*Contributed by Alan Harris*)

Regular readers will note the change of authorship this month. After 11 years, Robin Prytherch has relinquished co-compilership of this feature. Robin took over from Bob Spencer as Mike Everett's partner in January 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 40-41). We thank Robin for all his work since then, carried out in the true traditions of service to ornithology.

We welcome Bob Scott as Robin's successor. Long-established RSPB staff member (now Head of Reserves Management), Bob's ornithological pedigree is immaculate (in contrast to his bearded appearance), with Beddington sewage-farm, St Agnes, Dungeness Bird Observatory and the north Kent marshes featuring strongly in the early days: see the profile by Mick Rogers and Harry Cawkell (*Brit. Birds* 74: 283-285). As they wrote, 'He has the happy knack of presenting the humorous side of any situation', so we look forward to some light touches to come in 'N & c'.

It is noteworthy that Bob is only the eighth compiler of 'News and comment' in its entire 30-year history. We wish him well and hope he enjoys the task. EDS

BIY '93



17. BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR 1993. Left to right, Ren Hathway (third), Richard Allen (winner), Mr Kenji Ajima (*Kowa Europe GmbH*), and Dan Powell (second), London, July 1993 (*Steve Hickey/Pyser*)

The usual Press Reception was held at the Mall Galleries in London in July 1993 for the presentation of the awards to the winners of Bird Illustrator of the Year (*Brit. Birds* 86: 347-351).

The sponsors were again, for the sixth consecutive year, *Kowa* telescopes. The links with *Kowa* and with the Society of Wildlife Artists are much appreciated by *BB*, and also, judging

by the looks on their faces, by the BIY prizewinners (plate 17).

The display-boards showing the work of 41 entrants were also, as is now traditional, on exhibition at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water.

Details of this year's competition are given on pages 31-32 (the rules are the same as in past years).

The 'Safeway' to save whales

In response to consumer demand, the supermarket chain *Safeway* has officially joined the Greenpeace boycott of Norwegian products. *Safeway* has informed its suppliers of fresh fish that none must come from Norway for so long as Norway persists in whaling and Greenpeace maintains its boycott.

Greenpeace encourages those who support

the *Safeway* decision to show their abhorrence of Norwegian whaling by choosing to shop at *Safeway*, and hopes that this action 'will send a powerful message to other leading high-street retailers, most notably *Sainsbury* and *Tesco*, that stocking Norwegian products is bad for business.' (*Greenpeace Campaign Report* 15)

'The Sea Swallow'

The annual appearance of the Royal Naval Bird Watching Society's journal is maybe taken for granted now (it is, after all, in its 42nd year). It does, however, often contain information of great interest even to birdwatchers with their feet firmly on the ground.

The annual review of members' records from the world's seas and oceans is this year supplemented by a list of suggested English names for all the world's seabirds, an atlas of Southern Hemisphere albatrosses, and various other notes and papers including accounts of the Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea*

chlororhynchos reported 35 nautical miles (65 km) off the Lizard, Cornwall, on 29th April 1985 (still under consideration by the BOURC), of a Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* hitch-hiking across the Atlantic in early 1992 (flying ashore towards Folkestone, Kent, on 29th February) and of the ex-Falkland Campaign Yellow-billed Shearwater *Chionis alba* which reached Plymouth, Devon, in September 1982.

Membership of the RNBWS is only £6.00 p.a.; a single issue of *Sea Swallow* costs £6.00 plus postage. Write to Hon. Secretary RNBWS, 19 Downlands Way, South Wonston, Winchester, Hampshire SO21 3HS.

Yellowhammers extinct

The latest *Cape Clear Bird Observatory Report* (no. 22, covering 1991-92) gives the astonishing and sad news that Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella* have become extinct as breeding birds on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork.

The Yellowhammer was formerly one of the island's commonest passerines, with a breeding population of about 35 pairs, and flocks of up to 80 in April and 100 in September-October (*The Natural History of Cape Clear Island*, 1973), so the fall to no more than three in a day (and no confirmed breeding) in the whole of 1991, and just a single record of a lone individual in 1992, is a dramatic example of the species' widespread decline in both Britain and Ireland.

The *CCBO Report* also notes a decline in the number of human visitors staying at the Ob-

servatory (except in October) and regrettably reports a continuing decline in the standard of recording, with 'a significant number of records of the scarcer species not substantiated at all' and gaps in daily census counts for the first time since 1959. We've heard of similar problems elsewhere. A sad reflection of some of today's attitudes!

On the plus side, the *Report* notes four species added to the island's list during 1991-92: Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (three together!), Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* and Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*, bringing the 1959-92 total to 283 species.

The 44-page *Report* is £3.00 (post free) from Ken Preston, The Rennies, Boreenmanna Road, Cork, Ireland.

Finnished names—goodbye history!

No more Baird's Sandpipers or Bonaparte's Gulls. No Cory's Shearwaters, Lady Amherst's Pheasants or Montagu's Harriers. Forget Wilson's Phalarope, Ross's and Sabine's Gulls. Richard's and Blyth's Pipits, Cetti's, Savi's and Pallas's (both), Rüppell's and Bonelli's Warblers: all gone, along with many more.

Or they would be if we were Finnish. A six-man committee of the Finnish ornithological society has (after 500 hours of discussion over the past 11 years) changed the Finnish names of 146 species on the West Palearctic List (*Limnium* 27: 153-168). The policy was to change

the name if it consisted partly of a person's name, if it referred to the wrong habitat or to the wrong geographic region, if it was poor taxonomy or if it gave a misleading identification cue.

These priorities are different from those adopted by the BOU and *BB* (*Brit. Birds* 81: 355-377; 85: 263-290, 620, 623-625; 86: 1-2), especially in relation to the links with history provided by the names of early ornithologists.

What would Barbara & Richard Mearns have to say, we wonder?

Blackcock management

The results of three years of research undertaken in Wales by John Cayford for the RSPB, with Forestry Commission funding, have now been published as *Technical Paper 1—Black Grouse and Forestry: habitat requirements and management*.

In a period when numbers of Black Grouse

Tetrao tetrix have fallen in much of Europe, here is a handy guide for landowners and land-managers who wish to do something to help. It costs a mere £3 from the Publications Section, Forestry Authority Research Station, Alice Holt Lodge, Wrecclesham, Farnham GU10 4LH.

The Birds of Chios

We all must welcome the publication of a book describing the birds of the island of Chios and encouraging their protection. No doubt very many of us would wish to have a birdwatching holiday on an idyllic Greek island.

It is a wonder, however, that there are still any birds to be seen when the number of birds killed *every year* by shooting, liming, netting and torchlight hunting (roosting birds 'are killed with a blow on the head with a stick') is esti-

mated to be 8,500,000—yes, that's not an error, 8½ million—on just one Greek island.

The Mayor of Homeropolis, Aristides Zannikos, supports conservation and also hopes that *The Birds of Chios* will encourage British birdwatchers to visit his island. If you would be more likely to visit Chios if this annual slaughter ceased, why not write, politely saying so, to Mr Zannikos at the Town Hall, Vrontados, Chios, Greece 822 00.

Roseates up

Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* have had their most successful year ever on Rockabill Island, Co. Dublin: 427 pairs nested, which is 13% up on the 1992 count and also represents about two-thirds of the East Atlantic breeding population outside the Azores. The Irish Wildbird Conservancy reports that productivity is high at Rockabill (1.68 chicks raised per pair); this, and a fairly stable situation elsewhere, has given rise to hopes that European numbers may at last have steadied after their long decline.

Audouin's up

We were amazed to read *Seabird Group Newsletter* 66 that the Ebro Delta colony of Audouin's Gulls *Larus audouinii* reached nearly 9,000 pairs in 1993, with some 21,000 young counted in June.

We at the N&C desk remain resolutely aloof from speculating on likely additions to the British List, but if we were to stick our necks out a little . . .

African Bird Club

'A New Focus for African Ornithology' is what the blurb tells us will be provided by the African Bird Club, set up on 1st January 1994.

Like its sister organisations covering the Middle East and the Orient, the new club will encourage research and conservation work, promote and work with local African societies, collate and publish new information, and generally serve as a continent-based organisation. It deserves the support of everyone interested in Africa and its birds (a number of which happen to be 'ours', too). Founder-membership costs £30- including the first year's subscription and normal membership £12 per annum. More details from The Membership Secretary, The African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA.

Swift ID plea

Gerald Driessens and Phil Chantler are currently working on an identification guide to the world's swifts and would be very grateful for any field notes or photographs of any species, but in particular the New World genera *Chaetura* and *Cypseloides*, and the Old World *Collocalia* (the infamous swiftlets). All correspondents will be fully acknowledged and material returned. Write to Gerald Driessens, Bosstraat 11, 2500 Liert, Belgium, or Phil Chantler, 66 Hunter Road, Willesborough, Ashford, Kent TN24 0RT.

Black-headed Yellow Wagtails

The race *Motacilla flava feldegg* has recently been formally admitted to the British and Irish List by the BOU Records Committee (*Ibis* 135: 493-499). The two records listed last November (*Brit. Birds* 86: 586) are not the only ones currently accepted; there have also been a further four: at Cresswell Ponds (Northumberland) on 2nd June 1985, Landguard (Suffolk) on 30th June 1985, Skomer (Dyfed) on 7th May 1986 and Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and Roke (Oxfordshire) during 4th June to 10th July 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 539; 85: 536).

Italian ban lapses

In our brief note on a hunting ban in Italy (*Brit. Birds* 86: 273), we were sceptical about its success.

The League for the Abolition of Hunting (Lombardy) tells us that this decree has lapsed and has not been renewed, and that they are particularly concerned about the future of three species which are now unprotected under Italian law: Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Brambling *F. montifringilla* and Hazel Hen *Bonasa bonasia*.

Once again, an EC Directive has been breached, seemingly with impunity.

Money from year-lists

If you do a lot of your birding in any of the counties served by Birdline East Anglia (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex), you can take part in the 1994 year-list competition, which gives you a chance not only to win £100 but also to contribute towards a grand total of £500 to be set aside as a donation for bird conservation. The rules are too long to list here—phone 0891 700251 to learn all about them, or watch out for them published at local reserves and centres.

'British Wildlife'

Promoted as 'The only independent magazine covering all aspects of British wildlife and its conservation', *British Wildlife* is now entering its fifth year. Perhaps now is a good time to remind readers that UK-based subscribers to *BB* are entitled to claim a concessionary price for an individual subscription (£15.95 for six issues). For full details, write to Subscription Department, British Wildlife Publishing, Lower Barn, Rooks Farm, Rotherwick, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG27 9BG.

'Emirates Bird Report'

The editorial introduction to the seventeenth edition notes that this publication will now become annual. Number 17 includes the 1992 bird report for the United Arab Emirates, with 312 species recorded, including ten new to the UAE list: White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*, Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*, Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis*, Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*, Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens*, Black Scrub-robin *Cercotrichas podobe*, Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*, Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*,

Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus* and Chestnut-breasted (White-capped) Bunting *Emberiza stewarti*.

As well as the long (but readable) systematic list, this 60-page report also includes ten short papers on subjects ranging from rarity records to migration problems and a comparison between birding now and 20 years ago. There are also four pages of colour photographs. It is all excellent value for £6.00 (including p&p), obtainable from Colin Richardson, Emirates Bird Group, PO Box 50394, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Rarities committee for the UAE

The first meeting of the newly formed Emirates Bird Records Committee was held in October 1993. Its members are Erik Hirschfeld (Chairman), Colin Richardson (Secretary), Simon Aspinall, John Bannon and Steve James. Any birders visiting the United Arab Emirates should send records to the Secretary/Bird Recorder, PO Box 50394, Dubai; tel./fax Dubai (+9714) 313378.

'Bird Watching'

Each month, we draw attention to the highlights in the monthly magazine *Bird Watching* (and *BW* reciprocates by doing the same for *BB*).

The January issue of *Bird Watching* contains an account of 'How I found the Bluetail'; a round-up of other rarity records; a county spotlight on Fife; and birding abroad in Morocco and Picardy.

Bird Watching is available from most bookshops or newsstands.

Association of European Rarities Committees

The delegates of the 19 national European rarities committees represented at a meeting on Heligoland, Germany, in early October 1993 voted unanimously to form the Association of European Rarities Committees.

The main aims of the Association will be to encourage the formation of a national rarities committee in every European country, to assist national committees in any way possible when requested to do so, to prepare and maintain a

European list, and to arrange meetings of delegates of its member committees at approximately two-yearly intervals, for the purpose of liaison and co-operation.

Full details of the Heligoland meeting will be published in a future issue.

The contact address for all correspondence is: AERC, c/o Christine Barthel, Limicola, Über dem Salzgraben 11, D-37574 Einbeck-Drüber, Germany.

OBC meeting in the Netherlands

As part of its tenth anniversary celebrations, the Oriental Bird Club will be holding a joint meeting with the Dutch Birding Association at the School of Veterinary Science at the University of Utrecht on 5th February 1994. For full details, phone Nigel Lindsey on Bradford (0274) 598949 (home) or 383567 (work).

Rare breeding birds

Observers with any outstanding information on rare breeding birds in Britain in 1993 are requested to send full details *now* to the relevant county bird recorder (or to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel's Secretary, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN).

Sunbird's ID expertise

They may be red-hot on their birds, but it seems that the staff of the bird-tour company *Sunbird* are a bit dodgy when it comes to identifying people. Their 140-page *Sunbird* brochure includes a photo of the *Sunbird* team, with Steve Rooke looking remarkably like Sean McMinn, and vice versa (well, they could be brothers, we admit), but has Paul Holt really

grown a magnificent beard and has Bryan Bland recently become respectable?

The solution, of course, is that the photo actually portrays the staff of *Dribnus* birdtours.

If you're thinking of a foreign birding holiday, you can obtain your copy of the brochure by writing to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—*Northern Ireland*Tim Cleeves—*Northeast*Frank Hamilton—*Scotland*Barrie Harding—*East Anglia*Oran O'Sullivan—*Republic of Ireland*Alan Richards—*Midlands*John Ryan—*Southwest*Don Taylor—*Southeast*Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*John Wilson—*Northwest*

Please contribute

News items ranging from major world, national or local ornithological or conservation events to personal news of well-known individual birders or even humorous snippets will be greatly welcomed by Mike Everett and Bob Scott for possible inclusion in this monthly feature.

Please send notes on anything which has interested you to 'News and comment', British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

1993 records

If you have not already done so, now is the time to submit all your relevant 1993 records. The names and addresses of the County/Regional Recorders were listed in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 28-30) and updating amendments appear periodically in 'News and comment' (see below).

Change of Recorder's address

Tim Dean, Recorder for Cumbria, has moved to Woodside, Blawith, Coniston, Cumbria LA12 8EQ.

Three new Recorders

Dr Tristan ap Rheinallt, 19 Shore Street, Port Wemyss, Isle of Islay, Strathclyde PA47 7ST, has taken over from Mike Madders as Recorder for Strathclyde (Argyll & Bute, except for Isles of Bute).

Brian D. Gibbs, 23 Lyngford Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7EE, has taken over from Brian Rabbitts as Recorder for Somerset.

Colin Jakes, Yewtree Cottage, 16 The Street, Gazeley, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 8RD, has taken over from Philip Murphy as Recorder for Suffolk.

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 15th November 1993 to 3rd January 1994

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* Braunton Marshes (Devon), 21st-28th November; River Tamar (Devon), 4th December. **Killdeer Plover** *Charadrius vociferus* Holyhead, Anglesey (Gwynedd), 31st December to 2nd January. **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* Fen Drayton (Cambridgeshire), 16th November to 3rd January. **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* Auchenreoch Loch (Dumfries & Galloway), 28th December. **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* Carsethorn (Dumfries & Galloway), 16th November; Tay Estuary (Tayside), 31st

December. **Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea* Lerwick area (Shetland), intermittently, 12th-26th December; Balranald, North Uist (Western Isles), 29th December. **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* Hunstanton and Heacham (Norfolk), 16th November to 5th December; Pendine (Dyfed), 16th November. **Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* Sullom Plantation (Shetland), 23rd-25th November. **Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis* Dorchester (Dorset), 7th-19th November.



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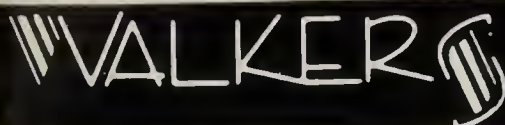
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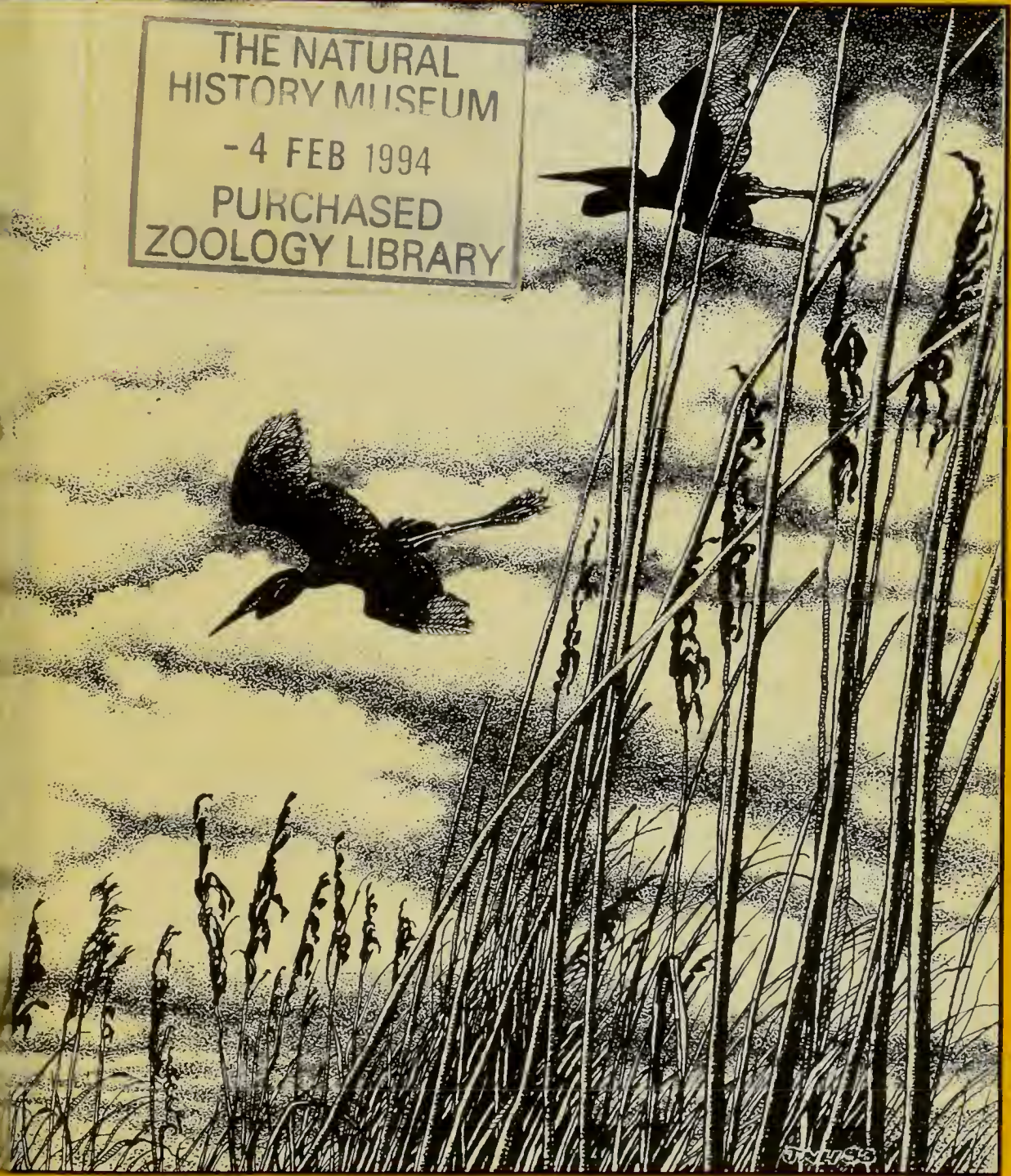
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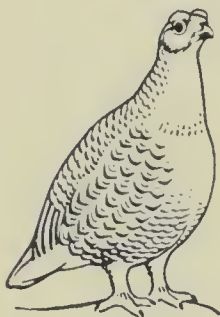
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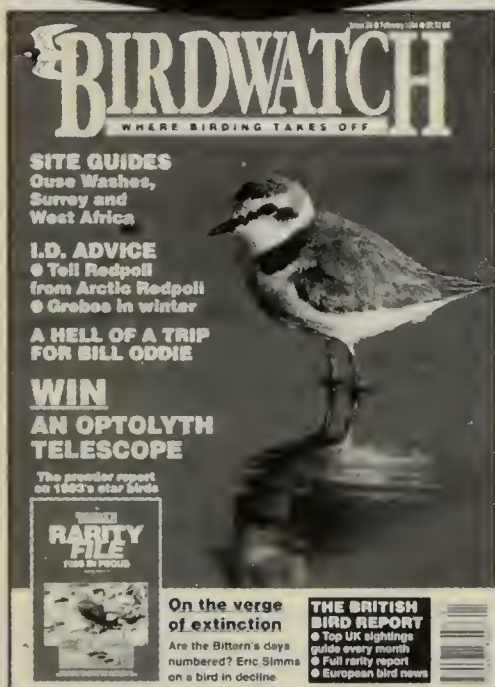
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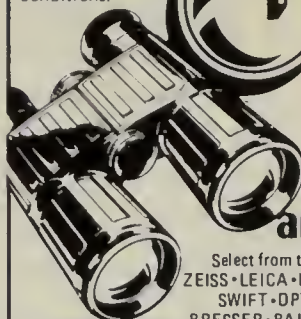
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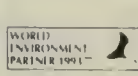
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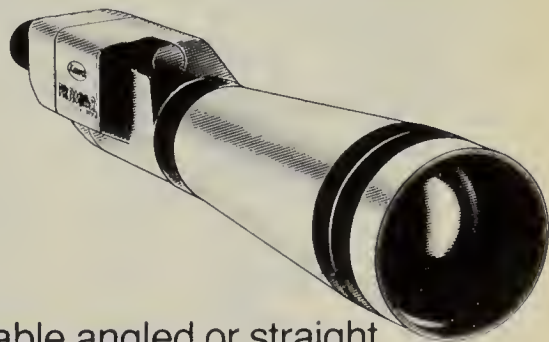
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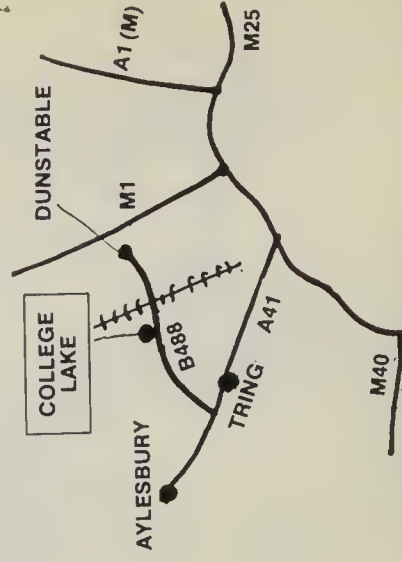
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Species and subspecies*

Alan Knox

Over 40 years ago, Bernard Tucker, then the editor of *British Birds* and one of the four compilers of the 'Witherby' *Handbook*, started a long paper which ran over several issues of this journal with the words:

'There are good reasons for considering that a review of the concept of subspecies and the use and limitations of trinomial names in a publication circulating widely amongst field ornithologists is desirable at the present time, if not overdue. . . . the nature of subspecies and of trinomial names is constantly misunderstood by field naturalists. The hazy or actually mistaken notions prevalent on the subject lead to a frequent misplacement of emphasis on subspecific distinctions and to the frequent use of subspecific names in contexts where they are at best inappropriate and at worst actually incorrect and misleading. An endeavour to dispel such misconceptions would be worthwhile even if it led only to a more correct usage of technical terms' (Tucker 1949).

He also believed that the concept of subspecies expressed 'some quite fundamental principles concerning the process of evolution and the origin of species', and he wished to draw attention to recent thoughts concerning the nature of subspecies.

Although many of the sentiments expressed in Tucker's paper still hold true, much has changed since then. From a time when the subspecies was the principal unit of interest, as seen in the *Handbook*, the emphasis has swung back to the species. Subspecies tend now to be dismissed in the small print of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* and are mentioned only occasionally in field-guides, regional avifaunas or the periodical literature. More fundamentally, the subspecies is no longer recognised as an inevitable micro-evolutionary concept. Indeed, its general usefulness has been brought into question (see the forum on avian subspecies in *The Auk* 99: 593-615).

It is therefore of interest to note the present increasing attention being given to subspecies by birdwatchers and ringers. This may, in part, be due to the greater sophistication of many observers and their desire to find more rare birds, but there is also an element of renewed interest in 'field taxonomy'.

There are two underlying problems with this revival. The first has already been mentioned: flaws in the concept of subspecies. The other is that geographic variation is often studied best in museums, where conditions are

* An invited paper. EDS

controlled and comparative material is available. This was the reason why field taxonomy became less popular with ringers in the 1960s and 1970s.

In this paper, I should like briefly to review certain aspects of the nature of subspecies from the point of view of the birdwatcher. I should also like to endorse the cautionary approach already urged by Lars Svensson, who pointed out that 'there is a limit to what can be identified in the field with a sufficient degree of credibility at the subspecific level' (Svensson 1990). To begin, I shall outline, as Tucker did, some principles of nomenclature.

Definitions and nomenclature

Scientific names

A species is usually defined as 'a group of interbreeding natural populations that is reproductively isolated from other such groups' (Mayr & Ashlock 1991). This means that species do not normally interbreed. The scientific names of species are always binomial (comprising two words): the genus, or generic, name (written with a capital letter) and the specific epithet (without a capital). Neither alone designates a species; only the combination is unique.

The genus groups together species more closely related to each other than they are to species in other genera. Similar principles apply to the higher categories of families and orders. This hierarchical way of grouping species is a powerful information system. By knowing which order, family or genus an otherwise unknown species belongs to, one can predict much about its appearance and behaviour. On being told that a particular bird belongs to a new species of *Phylloscopus*, it is immediately clear, without even seeing the bird, that it is a small, slender, insect-eating warbler, probably with greenish plumage.

Subspecies (or races) represent a level of variation within the species, where populations are actually or potentially interbreeding but are nevertheless sufficiently distinct in appearance to warrant being given a name. Subspecies are known formally by trinomial names (with a third word after the specific epithet). The form which was described first is known as the nominate subspecies, in which the specific name is repeated (e.g. *Motacilla alba alba*, sometimes abbreviated to *Motacilla a. alba* or *M. a. alba* if it has already been given in full). The nominate subspecies has no greater significance other than the chance event of being described first: it is not necessarily more widespread, more 'typical' in appearance, or older in evolutionary terms. If a species is not divided into subspecies it is termed monotypic, but this does not mean that the species does not show any variation among its populations.

The name of the person who described any species or subspecies may appear after the name, with or without the date of publication of the description. If the name is enclosed in brackets, this indicates that the author originally described the form believing it to belong to a different genus. For example, Linnaeus named the Yellow Wagtail '*Motacilla flava*' and the Thrush Nightingale '*Motacilla lusciniæ*'; the former is now known as '*M. flava* Linnaeus', and the latter as '*Luscinia luscinia* (Linnaeus)' as it has since been transferred to another genus. Although commonly seen in books and papers on other groups of animals or plants, authors' names and dates are now rarely given for birds, except in major faunistic works or when discussing taxonomic or nomenclatural matters that require them. They are largely unnecessary owing to the relative

stability of ornithological names and the existence of an authoritative world checklist (Peters 1931-87, see Bock 1990), two key factors that together apply to no other major group of animals.

The scientific names of birds (and other living things) are usually given in italics, a general printing convention to indicate words of foreign-language derivation (in this case, usually based on Latin*). This applies only to names of genera, species or subspecies. Names of higher categories (e.g. families or orders) are not usually printed in italics.

Changing names

Despite the general stability of scientific names, some changes occur, usually for one of two main reasons. The taxonomy of a group may be revised, leading to lumpings or splittings at either the genus or the species level, or, less frequently these days, older names with priority may be found in the literature.

Generic lumping and splitting

The Northern Gannet has long been placed with the boobies in the genus *Sula* (as *S. bassana*), but recent work suggests that there are sufficient differences between the gannets and the boobies to separate the former into the genus *Morus*, leaving the boobies in *Sula*. The Northern Gannet has therefore become *Morus bassanus*, with the ending of the specific epithet changing in line with the gender of the genus (BOURC 1991). The formation of scientific names (and other nomenclatural matters) is governed by rules laid down in the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (ICZN 1985). The lack of classical training amongst modern scientists has led to considerable confusion over name endings, and steps will probably be taken to simplify the relevant rules in the next edition of the *Code* (Savage 1990).

Specific lumping and splitting

Until the 1950s, Whistling and Bewick's Swans were regarded as separate species, *Cygnus columbianus* and *C. bewickii* respectively. Research then suggested (in retrospect, perhaps incorrectly) that they would be better treated as subspecies of the same species, so they were united under *C. columbianus*†. This name had priority (i.e. was older), having been published by Ord in 1815; Yarrell did not describe *C. bewickii* until 1830. The two types of swan therefore became *C. columbianus columbianus* and *C. c. bewickii*.

Priority

The other common reason for a change is that an older, but overlooked, name is discovered in the literature. As we have seen, one of the basic principles in nomenclature is that older names have priority. This usually works well to protect an existing name when another author later inadvertently describes and names the same species or subspecies. Priority works both ways, however, and can cause confusion when a long-forgotten name is resurrected from some dusty tome. A measure of protection for established names in common

*The term 'Latin name' is an inappropriate alternative to the correct term 'scientific name', since many are based on Greek or other languages. EDS

†Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus*. EDS

usage had been provided in the second edition of the *Code* (ICZN 1964). This prohibited the reintroduction of names which had been unused for 50 years. The provision was removed in the third edition (ICZN 1985), but is expected to return in the fourth (Savage 1990).

Variation among birds

Within populations

No two individual birds are ever exactly alike. In any single population, variation will be found within each species. There may be sexual dimorphism, where the males and females have different plumages. Adults and immatures may differ. Indeed, individual birds may pass through several different stages over a number of years before reaching their final adult plumages, becoming slightly larger (or smaller) in the process. There may be completely different summer and winter plumages, brought about by complete or partial moults. In the case of species which change their feathers only once a year, abrasion will usually cause significant differences between fresh and worn plumages. This can be quite marked, as with male Common Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs*, where brown feather edges wear off in spring to reveal the bright breeding colours, or more subtle though still quite noticeable, as with Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos*, where birds in fresh plumage look quite buff but become greyer as wear and fading proceeds.

Even with birds of any single age and sex class, at any one time of the year, the individuals will all differ in minor—or not so minor—ways. Some will be larger or smaller, some will be darker or lighter, some will be more or less spotted or otherwise marked. Variation may be in size, shape, colour, behaviour, song, physiology, timing of breeding, growth rate, aggressiveness or any other feature. There may even be polymorphism, where a particular feature may occur in two or more quite distinct states (e.g. bridled and non-bridled Common Guillemots *Uria aalge*; rufous and grey Tawny Owls *Strix aluco*). There will be genetic differences between individuals, and variation due to environmental influences.

So far, I have commented on two main types of variation at any one locality: variation in an individual over time and differences between individuals. A third type occurs when some feature(s) of the whole *population* changes over a short time scale. For example, in spring 1984 Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* returning to a colony in central Scotland were significantly smaller than those in the previous two years (Jones 1987). This was thought to have been due to the larger individuals suffering higher mortality in the African Sahel, where the drought had been particularly severe that winter.

All this, and more, contributes to the variation within any local breeding population and it is taxonomically insignificant. Because of this variation, however, it is important to compare like with like (e.g. only adult males on the breeding grounds) when studying geographic variation.

Between populations

Some species show no appreciable variation throughout their range, even though it may span thousands of kilometres. The Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* is one such case. Other species differ in size or appearance over quite

short distances, like the Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* within Britain and Ireland, or the Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, of which there are several subspecies on islands off Britain.

The populations of most birds with large ranges show at least some variation in measurements or plumage from place to place. Often, this geographic variation is weak, but, if marked, the populations may have been described as different subspecies (e.g. those of Yellow Wagtail and Redwing *Turdus iliacus*). New subspecies should be described only if the differences are distinct and more or less constant, but this has not always been the case. A large number of subspecies are based on small samples (often a single bird), or passage or wintering birds whose breeding areas are unknown, or on birds with different stages of plumage wear, or individuals falling within the range of variation of a form already described.

At its simplest, geographic variation may be expressed by birds at one end of their range being larger or darker than the birds at the other end. The variation may be more or less continuous, with the birds becoming, for example, gradually larger or darker from one part of the range to the other. This is clinal variation, and is particularly common among Palearctic birds.

Clinal variation may be smooth and gradual over large areas, particularly the continental ranges of birds. Rarely, however, do museums hold sufficient numbers of skins to demonstrate this gentle cline. More often, there are samples from a few widely separated localities. Being isolated sections of the cline, these may give the appearance that the species is made up of several distinct populations, many of which will have been named as subspecies in the past. Some may since have been recognised as invalid and the names might now be regarded as synonyms. Nevertheless, many invalid races persist owing to lack of recent research or the failure to apply consistent standards for subspecific recognition.

Some clines show genuine discontinuities, with relatively abrupt changes in, say, wing length, at some intermediate point. In such cases, the naming of the sections on either side of the step as subspecies is more widely accepted.

Simple clinal variation such as I have described is often complicated by further gentle or stepped clines within the variation of the same species, but in different directions. Wing length may become shorter from north to south at the same time as plumage becomes darker from east to west. Other clines, or patches of local variation, may be superimposed upon this to give a complex mosaic of characters. The naming of subspecies, which may have been perfectly feasible on the basis of a single character, would be quite inappropriate with this more-complex pattern of variation.

One of the main factors determining the pattern of variation is the extent to which individuals return to breed where they were born. Species of which individuals settle hundreds of kilometres away or which move considerable distances in subsequent breeding attempts tend to show little geographic variation. Ringing has shown that Northern Lapwings hatched in Britain may subsequently breed as far away as eastern Europe. This speeds the flow of genes from one area to another and reduces the possibility of genetic differentiation. On the other hand, the Eurasian Jay is probably the most sedentary of the British crows (Corvidae), and Winter Wrens remain all their

lives on some small islands, even if they are joined by other Winter Wrens in winter or on passage. Where gene flow is reduced, local populations can develop local characteristics either in response to local environmental conditions or by chance. If there is little immigration and emigration (and hence reduced gene flow between breeding populations), the characteristics of the local populations are not greatly diluted or spread to other areas.

Populations which are more or less isolated from others most readily develop their own characters, such as slightly longer bills or darker plumage. Such features may develop because selection favours birds with particular characteristics in the isolated areas, or because the separated populations accumulate genetic differences by chance as their gene pools evolve in isolation. An isolated population may also develop different characteristics because, for example, it was founded by a few individuals which simply happened to have darker plumage or longer-than-average bills as a result of individual variation (founder effect).

In recent years, studies of geographic variation have become more detailed and have looked at biochemical variation as well as external and anatomical (usually skeletal) characters. Such studies have sometimes revealed that biochemical and morphological variation do not run in parallel.

Variation in response to environment

Some differences between populations have little to do with genetics, but result from the environment in which the birds developed, lived or even moulted. The plumages of some larks can closely match their local environment simply because they have become extensively soiled from dust-bathing (Svensson 1992, footnote 2 on p. 62).

We know that most red colours in bird feathers are the result of carotenoid pigments derived from the diet. In places where carotenoids are scarce, red birds moult into orange, green or yellowish plumages. This mechanism is easily seen with captive birds, and almost certainly affects wild crossbills *Loxia* and other species, leading to variation in colour from place to place or flock to flock.

An environmental component of biometric variation has been demonstrated for the North American Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*, a species with strong geographic (clinal) variation in measurements. When eggs were experimentally transplanted from nests of blackbirds in north and south Florida and from Colorado to Minnesota, the measurements of the nestlings were subsequently found to be shifted towards those of the foster parents and away from the natural parents (James 1983).

Within a single species, individuals in humid areas such as the west of Ireland or the Hebrides often have dark plumages, whereas those in more arid zones tend to be pale (e.g. Song Thrush). How much of this is genetic is unknown, as is the extent to which melanin deposition (and dark coloration) is influenced by humidity or other environmental variables. Environmental variation is a poorly understood field of research.

Variation in vocalisations

In the case of some species, it is relatively easy to distinguish individuals on the basis of their vocalisations (e.g. Tawny Owls). Other species show

geographic variation in their calls or song, either at the local level (e.g. Common Chaffinches or Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra*) or on a broader basis. These call-types or song-types are called dialects, as with human beings. Dialect boundaries may or may not coincide with the boundaries of subspecies recognised by their plumages, measurements or biochemical characters. Some subspecies may have distinctive calls or songs (e.g. Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*, Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita*), while separate species may be vocally quite similar (e.g. Pied *Oenanthe pleschanka* and Black-eared Wheatears *O. hispanica*).

Subspecies

In contrast to Tucker's day, we now realise that subspecies are not just evolutionary steps on the way to full species. Many subspecies names are simply nomenclatural and curatorial conveniences. They provide useful names by which to group similar-looking skins in museum drawers, and names by which these groups may easily be discussed in the museum, the literature or the field.

The most obvious exceptions to this are isolated, well-defined races, particularly on islands, some of which may ultimately evolve into separate species. Indeed, for many island races it is already difficult to decide whether they should be treated as races or full species.

The main difficulties with the subspecies concept include:

1. The different trends found for different characters. This is manifest in clines running in different directions, mosaic variation and morphological and genetic variation not running in parallel. This makes it difficult to divide some species into logical and ordered races.
2. Similar characters occurring in different areas, sometimes separated by another population of the same species. This could imply that the same characters have evolved independently and that the similar forms may not be closely related in genetic terms.
3. Geographic variation occurring within subspecies, and the undesirability of naming microgeographic races or parts of a cline.
4. The different criteria of distinctness applied by different workers in the recognition and naming of races. At one extreme, authors such as G. M. Mathews described a great many subspecies based on the slightest of differences, many of which were not upheld on further examination.

Unless they are geographically separated, subspecies can and do interbreed. If they did not interbreed, their reproductive isolation would suggest that they were species. Often, one subspecies merges gradually into another. Because, by definition, races are capable of interbreeding, it is common to get intermediates. This makes it difficult or inappropriate to force individual birds into what may be entirely artificial taxonomic pigeon-holes.

While most species are relatively easy to tell apart, geographic variation within a species is almost always more subtle. This, and the fact that many races intergrade, makes separating races in the field less reliable than separating species. Most races are not identifiable in the field: the subtle differences in size or colour can be studied only by comparison with specimens in museums. Many of the named races were described long ago, and the taxonomy of the species is in need of revision. For many species, the number of specimens available in museums is still quite inadequate for a proper study to be undertaken. Many races are only weakly marked. Some racial differences are apparent only when comparing samples of several birds rather than looking at individuals.

Despite this, the subspecies can be of interest to the birdwatcher. Many

distinctive races breed in known geographic areas and this information can be used to track the migrations and movements of these birds (e.g. the Greenland race of White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris*). The origin of some rarities can also be determined (e.g. the 'Two-barred Warbler' *Phylloscopus trochiloides plumbeitarsus* in the Isles of Scilly in 1987).

This aspect of subspecies can, however, easily be misused. Most geographic variation in the Palearctic and North America is gradual and clinal. Even valid, non-clinal subspecies are often only subtly different from one another. Assigning individual birds to particular races can be difficult and unrealistic, especially in the field. The temptation is there, just because the forms bear scientific names, even if most of them are not discrete populations with well-defined characters.

The British Birds Rarities Committee and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee have recently published separate policy statements concerning subspecies (*Brit. Birds* 85: 330-333; *Ibis* 134: 380-381). Both committees emphasise the difficulties involved in the identification of races in the field or in the hand. This is not to be taken to imply that identification of subspecies should never be attempted outside a museum. Some subspecies clearly are identifiable in the field (e.g. the North American race of Common Teal *Anas crecca carolinensis* or the eastern race of Desert Warbler *Sylvia n. nana*), and more is being learned about others all the time. A certain amount of restraint would, however, be prudent.

Acknowledgments

David Parkin and Lars Svensson made valuable comments on a draft of this article.

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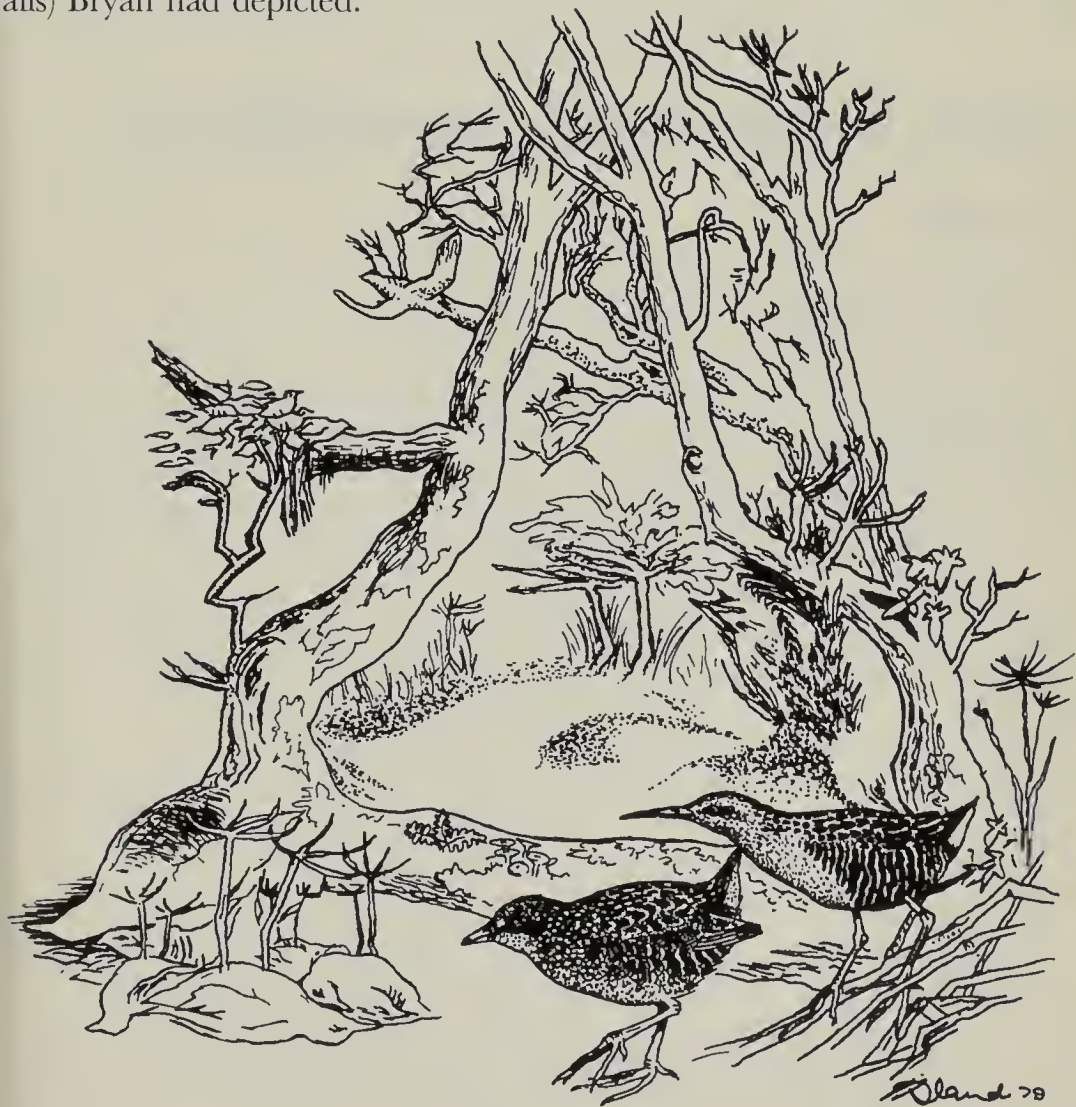
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Entrants supplied answers which ranged from two to 31. The correct number was 28, all of them clearly defined crakes or rails (extra birds were distinctly stringy).

The three winners, whose correct answers were picked in the draw on 15th January 1994, were Miss Sheila Alliez (Bedford), R. Buisson (Cockayne Hatley) and Nigel Jarman (Ashford, Kent), each of whom will receive a prize of a bottle of *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky.



Little, Least and Saunders's Terns

Richard Chandler and Claudia Wilds

Though both the BOU (1971) and *BIWP* (Cramp 1985) treat Least Tern *Sterna antillarum* as a subspecies of Little Tern *S. albifrons*, the AOU (1983) and *British Birds* (86: 2) recognise it as a full species. The accompanying photographs provide an interesting comparison of two very similar species in their various plumages, which is particularly appropriate since a small tern showing characters of *S. antillarum* appeared at Rye Harbour, East Sussex, during the breeding season in each of the years from 1983 to 1992. What was probably the same bird was also seen at West Wittering, East Sussex, and at Colne Point, Essex, in 1991 (Yates & Taffs 1990; Clifton 1992).

Other races of Little Tern occur in West Africa (*guineae*), and in east Asia to Australasia (*sinensis*). Five subspecies of Least Tern have been described, but recent research (Thompson *et al.* 1992) suggests that the status of at least three of them—those found in the USA—warrants reassessment.

BIWP treats Little and Least Terns as forming a superspecies with the very similar Saunders's Tern *S. saundersi* of the Red Sea, the South American Peruvian Tern *S. lorata*, Yellow-billed Tern *S. supercilialis*, and the Antipodean Fairy Tern *S. nereis*. Perhaps Damara Tern *S. balaenarum* of southwest Africa, though the most distinct of this group, should also be included within the superspecies. Although both the specific status of Saunders's Tern and its status as a Western Palearctic species are somewhat uncertain, it is of considerable interest to include photographs of Saunders's Tern for comparison along with those of Little and Least Tern.

This invited 'transatlantic' article has been written especially to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary this month of the American Birding Association. We greatly value our contacts with the ABA, whose interests in so many ways parallel our own, and offer them our warmest congratulations on this milestone in their history. EDS

Distribution

The race *albifrons* of Little Tern breeds from western Europe eastward to Russia, hardly extending beyond *BWP*'s chosen boundaries for the Western Palearctic, migrating south to winter coastally around most of Africa. Least Tern breeds in the USA, Mexico, the Bahamas, and the Caribbean, wintering south to northern South America. Most one-year-old Least stay on the wintering ground in their first summer, but a few are seen within the breeding range at least as far north as California and Virginia.

Saunders's Tern breeds from the Red Sea and Somalia east to Pakistan, and winters southeast to Sri Lanka, the Laccadive and Maldiv Islands and the Malay peninsula (Sibley & Monroe 1990) and perhaps south to East Africa. The uncertainty in the non-breeding distribution is a consequence of the difficulty of separating *S. albifrons* from *S. saundersi* in non-breeding plumage.

Plumages and moults

LITTLE TERN

Its small size, prominent white forehead, black crown and nape, and rather long black-tipped yellow bill make the summer adult Little Tern very distinctive. In flight, it is pale grey above, though the wings are whiter at the base of the primaries and on the secondaries, and the rump is also white. The white tail is strongly forked, but lacks the longer outer-tail streamers of Common *S. hirundo* and Arctic Terns *S. paradisaea*. Two (occasionally one or three) outer primaries are very dark grey-black above, the outermost with a pale shaft, though this is often difficult to see in the field, particularly on a perched bird.

The primary-moult sequence, which is common to all races of *S. albifrons*, and to *S. antillarum* and *S. saundersi*, explains why the outer primaries are so dark. Adult-summer birds commence primary moult with the innermost primary (p1*) in late June; this moult is suspended during migration, and is continued in the winter quarters, usually being completed by December. (Populations of Least Tern breeding in the southern United States, the Caribbean and Mexico begin primary moult in late May, and complete it in October.) While the first cycle is in progress, a second primary-moult cycle commences at p1 in October, continuing only until April, by which time seven to nine of the inner primaries have been replaced. A third cycle commences (again with p1) in February, which ceases at p2/p4, rarely at p1 or p5, again in April. Thus, at the beginning of the breeding seasons both *S. albifrons* and *S. antillarum* generally have the outer two primaries, and *S. saundersi* generally the outer three, remaining from the first cycle. These feathers at this time are five to seven months old, and because of wear are very dark, while the inner seven to nine primaries are fresher and much paler. By the end of the breeding season, the outer primaries (p9 and p10) are black and the middle ones dark, reducing the contrast. This flight pattern is lost altogether in the winter quarters once the first cycle of primary moult is

* In this paper, primaries are numbered descendently, following *BWP*.

complete and the outer primaries have been replaced. The second and third moult cycles remain incomplete; the primary moult starts anew with p1 in late June.

In late June, simultaneously with the commencement of the first wave of primary moult, most individuals begin to lose their black crown, the white forehead becoming more extensive at the expense of the black. Most Little Terns migrate at this stage, with a partially white crown, the black being finally lost in the winter quarters, when it is reduced to a band around the back of the head. In winter, all three species have a grey rump and tail, the same shade as the mantle; only the outer rectrices are white.

There are corresponding seasonal changes in the bare-part colours: the yellow on the bill of the breeding adult becomes blackish, being all dark by the end of September, and black by winter. From late February, the yellow reappears at the bill base, and at the same time the black crown feathers reappear. Legs and feet are bright yellow to reddish-orange in the breeding season, becoming duller, greyish or brownish, usually with some yellow, out of the breeding season.

Juveniles, too, are readily identifiable by their small size, even smaller than the adults that are usually in attendance. The crown is pale buff, fading to white, with black streaks, and there is a darker area through the eye, extending to the nape. The back is pale buff-grey, while the mantle, scapulars and tertials are white, with prominent dark brown subterminal U-shaped marks. In flight, the wings show more pattern than those of the summer adult, with dark grey lesser coverts and outer primaries providing a dark leading edge to the full length of the wing. The primaries are progressively darker from p1 to p10, unlike those of summer adults, whose outer two primaries are very much darker than the remainder. The rest of the wing is pale buffish-grey, the white-tipped secondaries and inner primaries making the wing paler towards its rear edge. The rump and tail are light grey. The smaller size of the juvenile is particularly noticeable in flight, a consequence of the blunter, more rounded wing-tips and the less deeply forked, darker-tipped tail.

Juveniles have blackish bills with paler cutting edges, and their legs and feet are variably greyish-pink to yellowish-brown.

The post-juvenile moult typically commences in August, birds replacing their darkish mantle, scapular, head and tertial feathers in approximately that sequence, so that by October they are in first-winter plumage, and are much whiter above, superficially like adult-winter birds. The dark-tipped tail feathers and dark juvenile lesser coverts are retained, however, the latter usually showing as a carpal bar on perched individuals, and giving them a very similar flight pattern to that of the juvenile. First-summers normally show the adult-winter head pattern, but a few have markings intermediate between adult winter and adult summer. In most cases, first-summers show some yellow on the bill, yellowish legs, and some black on the crown. The juvenile primaries have all been replaced by April or May, but a second cycle has begun in late winter. In early summer, they may show obvious primary moult, with missing feathers between the pale new inner primaries and the darker outer primaries. The carpal bar is retained until the second winter, and is

then replaced; second-winters may thus be separated from first-winters by the combination of carpal bar and fresh, pale inner primaries contrasting with worn, dark outer primaries.

Table 1. Average measurements (mm) of Little *Sterna a. albifrons*, Least *S. antillarum* and Saunders's Little Terns *S. saundersi*

Average wing length for Least given by Thompson *et al.* (1992) was 167 mm
Data from Cramp (1985)

Feature	Little		Least	Saunders's
	ADULT	JUVENILE	ADULT	ADULT
Wing	178	170	163	166
Bill	29.4	—	28.0	28.0
Tail-fork	38.6	15.1	40.7	28.6
Tarsus	16.7	—	15.3	—

LEAST TERN

Though marginally smaller, with a proportionately deeper tail-fork (table 1), adult summer *S. antillarum* is very similar to adult summer *S. albifrons*. The head patterns appear to be almost identical, and the primary-moult sequences are similar, so that both show the same basic wing pattern, with dark outer primaries prominent in flight. *S. antillarum*, however, has a grey rump and a grey tail, both the same colour as the mantle and differing from *S. albifrons*, which has a wholly white or very pale grey rump and tail. When fanned, the tail of Least Tern is seen to have largely white outer feathers. (It should be noted, though, that the other races of *S. albifrons*, together with *S. saundersi*, can have grey rumps and grey tail-centres.) The timing of the moult to winter plumage is more advanced than in Little Tern, with the head and body feathers often replaced by September and the last primaries new in October (Thompson & Slack 1983).

Juveniles of both *S. albifrons* and *S. antillarum* are quite similar, but *S. antillarum* is far more contrasty, with a broader, blacker carpal bar extending around the bend of the wing, always conspicuous on a standing individual. As with Little Tern, the head pattern can be quite variable, although, apart from light streaking, the crown is generally pale, and the black on the head is usually restricted to the area from in front of the eye to around the back of the head, sometimes extending down the nape in a V. The bill is frequently entirely black.

In plumages other than adult summer and juvenile, Little and Least Terns are apparently alike.

Calls

Massey (1976) discussed in detail the calls of Little and Least Terns. The calls are important since the considerable vocal divergence between the two is one of the main reasons for regarding them as separate species. The most frequent call given by either species in the breeding season is the 'basic' or 'advertising' call. With Little Tern, this is a difficult call to transliterate, perhaps best described (*BWP*) as a harsh, grating, repeated 'kyik', while with Least Tern it



18. Juvenile Little



19. Juvenile Least



20. First-winter Least



21. Second-winter Least



22. Adult summer Little



23. Adult summer Little

24. Below, adult summer Least

25. Below, adult Least in August





26. Adult summer Saunders's



27. Second-winter Saunders's



28. Adult summer Little



29. Adult summer Saunders's

28. Juvenile Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*, Kent, August 1987 (R. J. Chandler). This individual is starting to acquire a few plain, pale-grey, first-winter lower scapulars

29. Juvenile Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*, Texas, USA, August 1992 (R. J. Chandler). Note that the black of the head pattern is more restricted than on Little Tern *S. albifrons*, and that the carpal bar is blacker and more extensive

30. First-winter Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*, Texas, USA, August 1992 (R. J. Chandler). Has acquired plain, pale-grey, first-winter mantle and scapulars and has lost much of the light crown-streaking, but still retains the juvenile wing feathers

31. Second-winter Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*, Florida, September 1988 (R. J. Chandler). All feathering new except for outer primaries, which are still being replaced

32. Adult summer Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*, Spain, June 1993 (Tim Loseby/Windrush Photos)

33. Adult summer Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*, Kent, August 1987 (R. J. Chandler). Crown starting to moult, and bill darkening

34. Adult summer Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*, California, USA, April 1992 (R. J. Chandler)

35. Adult Least Tern *Sterna antillarum* in moult to winter plumage, Texas, USA, August 1992 (R. J. Chandler). Crown gaining some white, and bill turning black; note that whitish shafts to outer primaries, which are eight or nine months old (and are not diagnostic), are visible for once

36. Adult summer Saunders's Tern *Sterna saundersi* at nest, Oman, May 1991 (Hanne & Jens Eriksen). Three black outer primaries, 'square' white forehead and olive-yellow legs are together diagnostic of Saunders's Tern

37. Second-winter Saunders's Tern *Sterna saundersi*, Oman, September 1993 (Hanne & Jens Eriksen). Note dark bill and legs, darker feathers on forewing, five dark outer primaries (adult would have three), and head pattern close to that of summer adult

38. Adult summer Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* in flight, Norfolk, May 1992 (David Tipling/Windrush Photos). Note blackish outer two primaries, grey central primaries and pale grey inner primaries of the three moult cycles

39. Adult summer Saunders's Tern *Sterna saundersi* in flight, Abu Dhabi, UAE, May 1993 (Simon Aspinall). Note black outer three primaries, not two as on Little Tern *S. albifrons*

is a louder, more strident, higher-pitched, paired 'kee-zink, kee-zink' or 'puedeck puedeck'; this call led to the Rye Harbour bird being nicknamed 'Squeaker' (Yates & Taffs 1990).

Saunders's Tern

The differences between Little and Saunders's Terns are minor, and apparently restricted to breeding birds and their habitat, which is exclusively marine for *S. saundersi*. Typical *S. saundersi* in adult-summer plumage differs from *S. albifrons* in its smaller size and paler mantle and wings, contrasting more strongly with the darker outer primaries, of which there are normally three, not two, the result of arrested moult at p7 rather than p8. The outer primaries, including their shafts, are pure black. There is less white on the forehead and above the eye, making the white forehead patch appear square. The darker grey of the rump, concolorous with the mantle, extends to the central tail feathers. The legs are olive, dark reddish-brown or pinkish-brown, with yellow, when present, often limited to the rear of the tarsus and the soles of the feet. Measurements (table 1) suggest that the tail is less deeply forked than that of *S. albifrons*.

It is clear, however, that *S. saundersi* may be quite variable, and that many, if not most, of the features supposedly distinguishing it from *S. albifrons* intergrade with characters of that species. Even on classic *saundersi*, the black primary shafts can rarely be discerned in the field, and the distinctive leg colour is often hidden in the bird's own shadow (Bundy *et al.* 1989).

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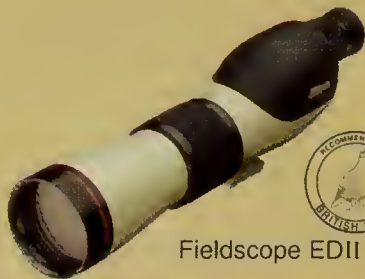
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From the Rarities Committee's files

American Golden Plover in Scilly The following details were submitted to the Rarities Committee on 1st July 1992:

AMERICAN (LESSER) GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis dominica*. Tresco, Scilly, 26th-28th May 1992.

This bird was seen by several observers during its stay, so I hope that (a) other descriptions are forthcoming and (b) this one doesn't have to be *too* detailed (bearing in mind recent comments in *BB* over skimpy notes!).

I was about to scan the waders in Pentle Bay early evening of 26th May, when a young(er) birder + wife approached me and said he'd been watching what he thought had to be a Lesser Golden Plover. I was *almost* disappointed, as, if he'd given me 10 seconds, I'd've found it myself! Anyway, after a half minute's slight scepticism, scanning two or three winter-plumage Grey Plovers *P. squatarola* I 'picked up' the bird higher up the beach trotting around on dry sand above the tideline. Even at 100 m or more, I was able to tell him 'Yes, it's definitely a Lesser Goldie.' But which one? We were enjoying a continuous period of east winds, Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* on every walk, Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* invading the UK, etc., so I confess I almost assumed it would turn out to be a *fulva* [Pacific Golden Plover]—this despite my initial long-distance jizz impression that told me it was going to turn out to be a *dominica*. The 'usual problem' was also exacerbated by the fact that all the *dominica* I've seen (about a dozen) have been nice, neat, grey autumn juveniles. This bird was clearly not all *that* grey—when I got close views I appreciated why. It turned out to be VERY worn and abraded, so that feather edges had often been lost and the overall tone had become a sort of 'wet-muddy' grey/brown—ashy—is that the word? Clearly the bird was a first-summer, which was showing no signs whatsoever of moulting into breeding plumage. I have often seen this plumage in waders that have decided not to migrate from their wintering grounds—e.g. May/June/July Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea* in the Seychelles, Red-necked Stints *C. ruficollis* in Australia, and so on. They just get smoother and dingier! However, this Lesser Goldie still had the 'look' of *dominica* and, having accumulated notes and had extremely close views—it was pretty tame—I was confident it *was* American. As it turned out, May '92 featured several 'Yanks'—no doubt birds that had wintered on this side of the Atlantic, as the constant easterlies surely wouldn't have favoured a spring crossing.

SEPARATION FROM EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER *P. apricaria*

Clearly slimmer and longer-legged, and with long primary projection well beyond the tail. Conspicuous whitish supercilium and dark cap giving Dotterel-like [*Charadrius morinellus*] head pattern. In flight, whole underwing including axillaries dusky grey (thus also separating from Grey Plover).

DISTINCTIVE CALLS . . .

(Incidentally NOT, I suspect, a lot of use when separating from *fulva*.) This bird gave four distinct calls:

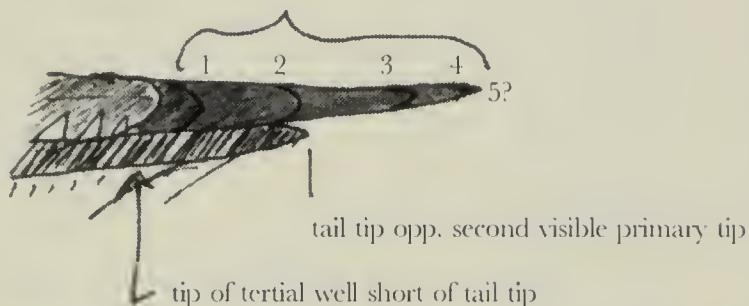
- 1) A Spotted Redshank-like [*Tringa erythropus*] 'tehuit'
- 2) A clear disyllabic 'twee-wee'
- 3) A hoarse disyllabic 'phee-wee' (as if it had a sore throat!)
- 4) A plaintive trisyllabic 'flu-ee-uu'

This latter is the call I've most commonly heard from autumn juvs.

SEPARATION FROM PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER *P. fulva*

1. Head pattern—clear white supercilium contrasting with dark cycline and dark cap. *P. fulva* would generally show some yellow on supercilium and rather less dark cap.
2. Overall tone of upperparts—by no means as grey as a fresh autumn juv. and—for example—much browner than nearby Grey Plovers, but nevertheless a tone greyer than I'd expect in *fulva* in similar plumage.
3. Underparts—less coarsely marked than *fulva* tends to be perhaps, with gentle vermiculations on upper breast merging into finer streaks on flanks and lower.
4. Leg length—area above the 'knee' about $\frac{2}{3}$ of below—a little less long-legged than *fulva*—though I find this hard to judge. Feet did *not* project beyond tail in flight.
5. Primary projection of tertial length and tail tip all suggest *dominica*.

four (poss. five?) primary tips visible (primaries darker than tertials)
the primary projection as a whole was almost as long as the visible tertial



6. Overall jizz—*dominica* always strikes me as smaller-headed and more pot-bellied and with a longer pointed tail end than *fulva*, which has a more 'scrawny' jizz, slighter overall.

I have seen masses of *fulva* in Australia, Thailand, etc., but, though I was in Australia soon after Tresco, ironically I could find none to make an almost direct comparison. So my comments above are based on memory, past notes, photos, etc.

I think the one warning note I would sound about a bird in first-summer (totally non-breeding) plumage like this individual would be concerning the overall *browner* tone than autumn juvs. It was, nevertheless, greyer than, say, a [European] Golden Plover—but really was *very* smooth. The mantle, for example, was almost *uniformly* ashy and only the top row of scapulars showed any real semblance of whitish 'spangling' with some darker feather centres. The *only* tinge of yellowish, however, was on the *rump*—and this visible only at very close range when the bird preened or flew. This is presumably because it's an area less susceptible to wear/bleaching.

W. E. ODDIE

31 Heath Hurst Road, London NW3

Peter Lansdown (former Chairman, British Birds Rarities Committee) has commented as follows: 'Bill Oddie's report of an American Golden Plover in the Isles of Scilly in May 1992 appears virtually as it was received by the Committee, with only a few minor editorial amendments.

'It was forwarded to the BBRC in support of the finders' submission, which, as it transpired, was never received. [Notes *were* eventually received from the finder, but not until after this record had been assessed and accepted on the basis of WEO's submission and after these comments by Peter Lansdown had been written. EDS.]

'Its format is thus noticeably different from those reports which have featured in this series to date (*Brit. Birds* 86: 3-5, 135-137, 206-209). Understandably, the report includes only some of the items of information that are requested on the front of the BBRC Record Form and does not contain a feather-by-feather description. Instead, as the identifier of the bird, Bill has covered the circumstances of the sighting, ageing and calls, and has concentrated on his reasons for identifying it as American Golden Plover rather than Pacific Golden Plover or European Golden Plover. Though the characters for separating these three species have become better understood in recent years, this is still not a straightforward trio as regards identification, particularly when the individual involved is not in the more-familiar juvenile, first-winter or adult summer plumages. Bill Oddie's detailed notes were much praised by the Committee members during the record's circulation for the thorough manner in which the characters used to separate American Golden Plover from its two close relatives were documented and discussed.

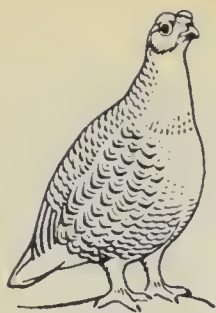
'Despite being on holiday at the time, and despite a visit to Australia shortly afterwards, Bill submitted his report to the BBRC, with a copy to the recorder for the Isles of Scilly, only five weeks after the sighting, thereby enabling the Committee to complete its assessment of the record in good time to include it in the 1992 Rarities Report (*Brit. Birds* 86: 477).

'John Marchant has commented that neither European Golden Plover nor Pacific Golden Plover shows such reduced 'spangling' in first-summer plumage as can American Golden Plover.' EDS



Twenty-five years ago...

In February 1969, there were three Lesser White-fronted Geese *Anser erythropus* at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire: a pair of adults and a third adult paired to a European White-fronted Goose *A. albifrons albifrons*.



Obituary

Peter Conder OBE, Hon. MA (1919-1993)

Back in 1960, when I took my first hesitant steps into the world of professional ornithology and conservation, my first boss was Peter Conder. At that time, he was Assistant Secretary of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, with responsibility for, amongst other things, the Society's fledgling network of reserves.

The early employer-employee relationship quickly changed to one of friendship. On first impressions, Peter was a quiet, shy man, but beneath the exterior he held a burning passion for conservation, linked to a firm belief that the only way to save the jewels amongst the bird sites was by ownership and management. He was to

remain a friend and associate up to the time of his death. Chatting over birds and birdwatching with Peter was a pleasure, be it in the RSPB library, across the table at a British Ornithologists' Club dinner or at one of the RSPB members' gatherings.

Peter's quiet, rather subtle sense of humour earned him the respect of the growing band of staff within the RSPB. I recall a response I received from him early in my career, when funds were in extremely short supply. I had asked for permission to purchase a hammer and nails; back came the reply: 'Buy the nails, but try and borrow the hammer!'. Much later, when his hearing began to fail him, he demonstrated to me the intricacies of his new 'high-tech' hearing aid. Placing a control pad (rather like a pocket calculator) on the table in front of us, he explained how, by punching in one code, he could hear all the background noise of bird song on a walk through the woods; another code would enable him to concentrate on a nearby companion in a noisy room; 'And', he said, 'if I punch in this code, I cannot hear my wife at all!'.



30. Peter Conder OBE, Hon. MA (*RSPB*)

Peter John Conder was born in Streatham, London, on 20th March 1919 and showed his first interest in birds before reaching his teens by identifying a 'Willy Wagtail' from a child's bird book his sister had been given for Christmas. It was at Cranleigh School, however, that the interest developed. At the Junior school, he won a prize for completing a bird diary—although he was apparently the only pupil to manage the completion, so competition was not too strong. Later, however, it was the Cranleigh School Ornithological Society and its organising master, Marston Henniker-Gotley, that gave him the basis of his ornithological knowledge. At 5 a.m., and without waking anyone else, he would slip out of the school dormitory, through a passage window and be on his bike for some early-morning birdwatching.

After completing his education at Lausanne, Switzerland, where he learnt French, Peter spent six weeks with the British Schools Exploring Society in Newfoundland. He described this experience as 'tough and very character-building'. In the spring of 1938, with formal education behind him, he joined the voucher department of the family advertising firm, *S. H. Benson*. This period of his life, although short (he was called up for military service the following year), taught him much about British newspapers and advertising—all of which stood him in good stead when he eventually came to oversee the RSPB's meteoric growth in the 1960s-70s.

Peter would talk little about his wartime experiences. Commissioned as a second-lieutenant in the Royal Corps of Signals, he was attached to the 51st Highland Division and was captured at St Valery-sur-Somme in June 1940. He was to be a prisoner of war for five years. This did not stop his birdwatching, and his German captors soon became used to his activities to such an extent that he became a useful look-out during escape attempts. He made detailed observations on Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis*, recording his results on whatever material was available, including German toilet paper. Eventually he escaped, just months before the end of the war, and made it safely to the American lines.

Following the war, Peter could not settle back into advertising, and, after a brief spell at the British Museum (Natural History), he accepted, in 1947, the post of warden with the West Wales Field Society on Skokholm. It was on this island that he studied the Northern Whetstone *Oenanthe oenanthe*—the subject of his final and arguably finest publication in 1990. Before completing seven years of island life, he had met and married Pat Higginson in 1952. It was after this period that Peter was to make the career move that presented him with the opportunity to make a significant and important contribution to conservation in general and bird protection in particular. He accepted the post of Assistant Secretary with the RSPB, becoming its Director in 1962.

Whilst its reins were in his hands, the Society's success was quite phenomenal. Membership rose from 20,000 to 200,000; a national campaign was waged (and won) against the use of persistent pesticides in the countryside; the Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* was re-established as a breeding bird in Scotland; a strong research base was established; and conservation issues began to be tackled at government level. His one declared regret during his 13 years as Director was that he could not achieve a merger between the RSPB and the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves (now RSNCR). In

1975, at the age of 56, Peter Conder retired from the RSPB. He could see the wisdom of new blood moving into a very different Society from the one that he had taken on 13 years earlier. He also perhaps wanted to return to a quieter way of life, for the continual round of meetings and committees kept him farther and farther from the birds that he loved. Throughout his career, he was essentially 'an amateur bird man' and delighted in a windswept day on the coast, binoculars around his neck and just one or two friends for company.

When time allowed, he enjoyed gardening and painting at his home in the village of Comberton on the outskirts of Cambridge. Following his retirement, however, with more time available, Peter began to travel widely—to Pakistan, Jordan, Mallorca, Galapagos, Nepal—sometimes on holiday, sometimes as leader or guest lecturer for tours and sometimes to give management advice or write management plans for protected areas.

His expertise was widely sought, and he served on the Advisory Committee for England of the Nature Conservancy Council, on the Conservation Panel of the National Trust and was a founder member of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. Following his retirement, he was awarded the RSPB Gold Medal, and received an Honorary Master of Arts degree from the Open University in 1977. He was created an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1976 for his work in conservation. The staff who had worked with him commented that it should have been a knighthood.

Peter Conder described himself as 'desperately middle-class', an 'academic failure' and 'a bit of a loner'. He changed from a nest-robbing schoolboy into a man who played a major role in developing the conservation movement in Britain. He held the respect and friendship of all those who worked with him—and many of his values and beliefs rubbed off onto those staff (amongst whom I gladly number myself) who continue with the RSPB today. It was an honour and a pleasure to have known and worked with Peter Conder. He is survived by his wife and two children.

BOB SCOTT



Letters

An answer to Chylarecki's comments on the 'new Herring Gull taxonomy' The new Herring Gull taxonomy adopted by the editorial board of *British Birds* (86: 1-2) has been questioned recently by Chylarecki (1993a), with whose comments we partly agree and even would like to amplify. Some of the points he raised cannot, however, be so easily accepted.

Oversimplification and misinterpretation

We fully agree with Chylarecki when he stresses that the intra-population variability can be far greater than often suspected by gull enthusiasts. The danger is great that ignorance of this variability leads to false identification, thereafter impairing the general knowledge of (sub)species distribution and taxonomic relationships.

Chylarecki (1993a, b) has already discussed a typical example of such oversimplification, i.e. Golley's (1993) description of the Scandinavian subspecies of Herring Gull *Larus argentatus argentatus*. Sadly, this is not the only case, in the recent birdwatching literature, of abrupt identification based on supposed-to-be-valid criteria which in fact have not been checked against either museum collections or the numerous descriptions made by those who have studied the systematics of these gulls. We can quote, for example, Kennerley (1987), who described the *mongolicus* (sub)species as being 'as dark as Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* of subspecies *L. f. graellsii*', although this is far too dark a colour (*mongolicus*, which the three of us know from its breeding places on Lake Baikal and which PY and AVF have also studied as skins, is about the same colour as other Asian forms such as *taimyrensis* or *vegae*, i.e. rather close to *cachinnans*, *michahellis* or *argentatus*, and virtually impossible to tell apart in the field on mantle colour alone). Some birdwatchers nevertheless continue to use Kennerley's criteria in southeast Asia and identify as *mongolicus* birds which are certainly not that form.

The problem is similar with *armenicus*, the bill band of which has been uncritically considered so characteristic and unique that it must warrant the promotion of the Armenian Gull to the species level, and must facilitate its location in winter quarters. We now know, however, that the bill band is not at all a constant character of breeding *armenicus* either in Armenia (Filchagov 1993) or in eastern Turkey (pers. obs., PJD) and that its bill markings are occasionally shared by breeders of other races (Yésou & Filchagov unpubl.), while a number of other forms frequently show a bill band in winter (Hirschfeld 1992; Yésou & Filchagov unpubl.), implying that claims of *armenicus* wintering in various places in the Near and Middle East need confirmation when the presence of a bill band is the only diagnostic feature quoted.

Field identification and the value of jizz

While agreeing that caution is needed when identifying different forms of large gulls, we have difficulty in understanding Chylarecki's (1993a) disbelief in experienced observers' capabilities of telling adult Herring Gull (in practice subspecies *argentatus* and *argenteus*) from Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans* (including subspecies *michahellis*) in the field. So far as we are aware, the commonest way to identify these birds is not by counting their black-tipped primaries, as Chylarecki (1993a) seems to believe, but by reference to their silhouette and stance, which differ according to their differences in structure: this of course needs some practice and experience with the different forms in the field. Their voice also helps identify the two species (Teyssèdre 1983, 1984; Panov *et al.* 1991; Mierauskas *et al.* 1991), as does the dark underside of all the primaries and secondaries, which contrasts with the rest of the wing almost as strongly on the Yellow-legged Gull as on the Lesser Black-backed Gull, whereas on the Herring Gull only the outer primaries look dark (Grant 1986; Yésou 1991).

We do not intend to discuss the field identification of the Yellow-legged Gull any more (as this will be the subject of a forthcoming paper in *British Birds*) and simply want to stress that, while a gull specialist rightly has to warn birdwatchers against possible misinterpretation and tell them 'Don't try to do too much', he must also accept that field identification has improved over the past 15 years to the point that it is now an efficient tool for the study of these forms' relationships in Europe. This is true from the Atlantic coast of France to the Baltic area, despite Chylarecki's (1993a) assumption that 'no good criteria exist to distinguish *cachinnans* from yellow-legged *argentatus*' (the so-called 'omissus' population).

We are surprised that Chylarecki based this assumption on Mierauskas & Greimas (1992). These authors actually wrote that '*cachinnans* can only be differentiated with certainty from yellow-legged Herring Gulls if the long call and visual display are documented. Biometric characters and wing-tip pattern are ineffective for identification because they overlap and show intraspecific variation': clearly, they consider here an identification process in which each character is analysed independently of the others, paying no care to the general aspect of the bird, even less to its 'jizz'. Chylarecki (1993a) could, however, have referred to another assessment made by Mierauskas & Greimas (1992), that 'there [are] clear morphological differences between Yellow-legged and Herring Gulls. The Baltic Herring Gulls [are] slightly larger than Black Sea Yellow-legged Gulls but the latter [have] a considerably larger bill and longer wings', points which contribute to the characteristic jizz of each species. Further Russian ornithologists with extensive field experience of the Herring Gull near the White Sea or on the Murman coast, and of Yellow-legged Gulls from the Black to the Caspian Seas, confirm that their silhouettes differ in this way (AVF; V. I. Zubakin and others verbally). This being so, we repeat that reference to jizz in an identification process needs a good deal of experience of the different forms and that, care being needed, some individual birds might better be left unidentified.

The 'omissus' Pandora's box

Chylarecki (1993a) referred to 'omissus' in order to suggest that the *cachinnans*

group of forms may interbreed with the *argentatus* group. As the term '*omissus*' has been used in so many different ways, readers with limited experience of gull taxonomy may appreciate a résumé of what this form is supposed to be.

The original, and very short, description of *omissus* was written by Pleske (1928), who referred to birds breeding in the Gulf of Finland, near the White Sea and along the Murman coast, which, among other characters, had legs 'sometimes flesh-coloured, sometimes yellow'; some additional notes by Buturlin (1934) and Dementiev (1951) did not really improve this laconic description. Barth (1968) showed that Pleske's description falls within the range of variability of *argentatus* and that the name '*omissus*' must therefore be considered a synonym of *argentatus*, as specialists such as Voipio (1954) and Stegmann (1960) already did before Barth.

Nevertheless, many authors have continued to use this name, sometimes referring only to the yellow-legged components of the population on the basis that colonies with only yellow-legged breeders reportedly occurred in the near past in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and possibly Karelia (see Kumari 1978); now, however, these colonies consist of both pink-legged and yellow-legged individuals which regularly interbreed (Mierauskas *et al.* 1991; M. Kilpi verbally).

Also, '*omissus*' is often used in connection with the hypothesis developed mainly by Voipio (1954) that the yellow legs of some *argentatus* Herring Gulls may be due to intergradation with *cachinnans* migrating northward and reaching the Baltic area. The idea is not completely unsound, as part of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea populations of *cachinnans* migrates northward along river valleys. In a process similar to that which occurs with *melanotos* in western and central Europe, some of these migrants stay and breed inland: about 100 pairs have recently settled as far north as the latitude of Glasgow, in the Nizhny Novgorod (previously Gorki) area (AVF), and others may colonise other northern places if the conditions favouring this northward dispersion persist. Thus, had a similar situation existed in the past, some *cachinnans* might once have occasionally bred near the Baltic. That they may have paired with *argentatus*, thus explaining the yellow leg colour of some present-day Herring Gulls, remains, however, as mere speculation.

Such authorities as Stegmann (1960) and Vaurie (1965) rejected Voipio's (1954) hypothesis and, more recently, Kuschert (1979) found no biometric difference between pink-legged and yellow-legged birds breeding in northeastern Germany, while Mierauskas *et al.* (1991) found that yellow-legged Herring Gulls breeding inland in Latvia (i.e. the '*omissus*' of some authors, *sensu* Haffer 1982) were very close to typical *argentatus* in morphometry, and similar in vocalisations, while differing markedly from Black Sea *cachinnans*. They concluded that their results do not validate '*omissus*' as a good subspecies and 'do not support the hypothesis of Voipio . . . that Baltic yellow-legged gulls are a hybridization product between local populations and immigrants from the south (*cachinnans*)', a conclusion which agrees with the expectation that a hybrid population must show morphometric characters somewhat intermediate between those of its parent forms (Snell 1991). We are surprised that Chylarecki (1993a), while quoting Mierauskas *et al.* (1991) as well as Mierauskas & Greimas (1992), who reiterated these conclusions, nevertheless continues to quote Voipio's hypothesis as an 'as yet unfalsified scenario'.

In any case, it appears that the name '*omissus*' has no strong scientific value and causes confusion. It would thus be preferable not to apply it to any population (greatly better would be the use of a geographic term, such as 'southern Baltic *argentatus*' for example, depending on the population considered) and to place this name between inverted commas when it does need to be quoted. If it is shown by the ongoing studies in the Baltic area and western Russia that a particular population clearly differs from *argentatus*, then a new, non-confusing, name should be devised.

Measurements of Yellow-legged Gulls

Chylarecki (1993a) regretted that biometric data on gulls breeding on the Atlantic coast of France were 'lacking as yet'. We wonder whether he is really aware of the situation occurring there, and of the available literature? Information of various kinds quoted by Yésou (1991), and similar data which have continued to accumulate since then, leave absolutely no doubt of the fact that the Yellow-legged Gulls breeding in western France are coming from the northwestern Mediterranean population. Similarly, what is known of the dispersion of the Herring Gull in France (Migot 1985) clearly shows that Brittany is almost the only origin for the Herring Gulls which breed side by side with Yellow-legged Gulls in western France.

The biometrics of Herring Gulls (subspecies *argenteus*) from Brittany have been analysed by Migot (1986, 1987) and Snell (1991), while Isenmann (1973), Launay (1984), Carrera *et al.* (1987), Beaubrun (1988) and again Snell (1991) have published many data on the biometrics of Yellow-legged Gull (*nichahellis*) from the northwest Mediterranean basin. The state of knowledge is pretty good, and we do not consider of prime necessity the collection of further data on the birds breeding on the Atlantic coast of France: their settlement in sympatry is recent (since 1976) and a gene flow very probably continues from the parent populations, so it is unlikely that the data required by Chylarecki (1993a) would differ from those already available from Brittany and the Mediterranean area.

Moreover, collecting such data might disturb the breeders that we prefer to leave undisturbed in order to observe their interactions in as natural a situation as possible. Here, readers may be interested to know that during the breeding seasons 1991 to 1993 the relationships between species in western France, and their breeding biology, remained similar to that reported for the years before by Yésou (1991). There are nearly 100 pure pairs of Yellow-legged Gulls, and limited mixed-pairing. A few Lesser Black-backed Gulls continue to pair occasionally with either Herring Gull or Yellow-legged Gull, while the two latter forms do not efficiently interbreed: only two Herring \times Yellow-legged Gull pairs are known (both in Bassin d'Arcachon, at the very southern limit of the Herring Gull breeding range, one since 1988, the other since 1991), which laid every year but did not produce any young (C. Feigné & A. Fleury verbally).

Recognising three species

Observations from both western France (Yésou 1991, and above) and the Baltic area (Mierauskas *et al.* 1991; Mierauskas & Greimas 1992), therefore,

fully support the editorial decision (*Brit. Birds* 86: 1-2) to recognise the split of the Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans* from Herring Gull *L. argentatus*. In our opinion, the debate should no longer be 'Does the Yellow-legged Gull deserve species status?' but 'Should any subspecies other than *cachinnans*, *atlantis* and *michahellis* be included in this species?' (i.e. do easternmost *cachinnans* intergrade or not with *barabensis* or *mongolicus*?).

We also recognise the specific status of the Armenian Gull *L. armenicus*, which shows a lot of essential morphological and biological differences from the Yellow-legged Gulls which are surrounding its breeding range. This being so, we agree with Chylarecki (1993a) that its relations with *barabensis* and *taimyrensis* deserve further attention, as already stressed independently by Bourne (1991, 1993) and Filchagov (1993). Further studies on the Asian breeding grounds are obviously welcome; nevertheless, the Armenian Gull is currently best considered a full species, despite the facts that its field marks are not so characteristic as once thought and that geographical isolation—which is not the main argument in the present case—is a weak basis for splitting species (Filchagov 1993).

To conclude, we wish to stress that the new proposal regarding the taxonomy of the 'Herring Gull' complex is arising under the pressure of facts, resulting in new information being available on the biology of different forms. The decision to split the Herring Gull into three species is thus consistent with the 'biological species' concept—to an even greater extent than earlier statements—and owes nothing to any fashion for the 'phylogenetical species' concept as Chylarecki (1993a) claimed.

Acknowledgments

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Why do Common Cuckoos resemble raptors? For some years, I have been observing the behaviour of the Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* and its host, the Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*, on heather moorland in northern Scotland, and have come to the conclusion that the cuckoo's resemblance to a bird of prey actually helps it to locate the nests of such host species. On many occasions, I have seen pairs of Meadow Pipits rising from the heather to mob a cuckoo as it flew low over the moor: sometimes, the cuckoo has continued flying until the pipits stopped pursuing and returned to their nest site; the

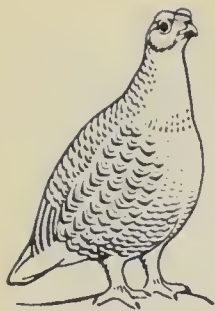
cuckoo then landed on the heather as if assessing the situation, then flew back through the Meadow Pipits' territory, whereupon the latter followed, this time in a different direction. Was the cuckoo judging the location of the pipits' nest by the distance they continued to mob in either direction? As Meadow Pipits' nests are well hidden under overhanging vegetation they may be difficult to find, especially if the female is sitting. By mimicking a raptor and encouraging the potential host to follow, and by then watching the latter's behaviour, the cuckoo may be shortening the time it would normally take to find a nest that is so well concealed.

Two further explanations for hawk mimicry suggested by other observers are: (i) that it protects the cuckoo from attack by other birds of prey that would not normally prey on similar species; and (ii) that the likeness to a raptor frightens the potential host species away from its nest, so the cuckoo can lay its eggs. In fact, hawk mimicry gives the Common Cuckoo very little protection from the Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, which quite regularly preys on it; and, in my experience, this mimicry, instead of frightening off host species, tends to attract them.

The behaviour of cuckoos on moorland may, however, be different from that in other habitats. Ian Wyllic (1981, *The Cuckoo*) suggested that the Common Cuckoo finds its hosts' nests by watching them from a vantage point, such as a tree branch, as they build. On open moorland, there are very few places for the cuckoo to hide and observe, and encouraging potential hosts to mob it may be the only way the cuckoo can get some idea of the location of a Meadow Pipit's nest. I use a similar technique myself to locate nests of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* when the female is off: judging the intensity of attack by the female harrier guides me to the most likely spot.

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Reviews

The Great Tit. By **Andrew Gosler.** Hamlyn, London, 1993. 128 pages; 24 colour plates; 22 black-and-white line drawings. ISBN 0-600-57950-6. Paperback £9.99.

It is difficult to believe that so much information could be contained within so few pages. Doubtless a slightly small typeface and innate editorial skills have helped the author achieve this, but there is an enviable wealth of expertly organised knowledge and fascination between the covers of this super paperback. Andrew Gosler's familiarity with the Great Tit *Parus major* through personal research shines out, be it in biology, behaviour, beak size – or simply how best to keep out hungry weasels *Mustela nivalis*, the scourge of many a nestbox study. The text is succinct, but remains eminently readable throughout, and certainly embraces far more than most readers might have thought at the onset would be of interest about just one bird species. References to sources and further reading abound without destroying the reading flow, and there are many useful cross-references to other parts of the text. Usefully, accurately and also delightfully illustrated by photographs and by Norman Arlott, this book is excellent value and cannot be too highly recommended, no matter who you are or what your ornithological interest: even proverbial maiden aunts with a fixation for cats will find it difficult to put down.

JIM FLEGG

Wildfowl of the British Isles and North-West Europe. By **Brian P. Martin.** **Paintings by Alastair Proud.** David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1993. 192 pages; 52 colour plates; 17 black-and-white plates; 14 line-drawings. ISBN 0-7153-9996-9. £16.99.

Who am I to say: 'What! Another book on wildfowl?'. This one is better than most. The author has done his homework well and information up to at least winter 1990/91 on numbers and habits is included in the detailed species accounts.

The full-page colour plates are quite pleasant, but sometimes suffer by comparison with the photographs, which are mainly of captive birds. Thus a photograph shows the bill colour of the Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* much better than does the facing painting; the Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* is too large in body and bill; the Northern Pintails *Anas acuta* too short in the neck.

Marginal notes add lots of facts to the main text. Note, though, that the weights and measurements are described as 'averages', when what are given are ranges. Had there been a full bibliography, reflecting the author's diligent researches, I could have wholeheartedly recommended this as a very useful reference work on this ever-popular group. Alas, it is restricted, by the publishers one presumes, to little more than a page of 'Further reading', when three adjacent pages are devoted to rather poor flight silhouettes.

A near miss, then, but good value for money, nonetheless.

MALCOLM OGILVIE

Collins Field Guide: Birds of Britain and Europe. By **Roger Tory Peterson, Guy Mountfort & P. A. D. Hollom.** **Fifth, revised and enlarged edition.** In collaboration with **D. I. M. Wallace.** Harper-Collins, London, 1993. 320 pages; 1,520 colour illustrations; 366 maps. ISBN 0-00-219900-0. £14.99.

This book was redesigned for the fourth edition, with the plates in a central portion between blocks of species descriptions and distribution maps at the back. This format presents problems,

readers having to flick between description and plate, compared with the standard text and plate on a double-page adopted by many other guides.

The big advantage of 'Peterson' over other genuine field guides—Jonsson (1992), Lewington *et al.* (1991) and Harris *et al.* (1989) are not really field guides—was that the plates were so much better than the competition. Some of these plates have been repainted, but more reformatted. Generally this works well, although the colour reproduction leaves a little to be desired on the review copy, with many of the old plates very dark and blue (I've never seen a pale blue Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*). The new plates are variable, with the scoters *Melanitta* and eiders *Somateria* superb, but the 'rare' warblers (Sylviidae) almost as bad as those in any other field guide.

The textual information is generally comprehensive, but because of the comparatively large type has perhaps less detail than Bruun *et al.* (1986).

The information is accurate and sufficient to identify the majority of birds. It is not the ideal guide (which still does not exist), but is as good as any other, if slightly more difficult to use. If someone were to produce the text of Bruun *et al.* or Ferguson-Lees *et al.* (1983) with the Peterson paintings (or, even better, a full set by Dan Zetterström) then we could have the ideal field guide.

COLIN BRADSHAW

Birds in Brazil: a natural history. By Helmut Sick. Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1993. 725 pages; 47 colour plates; 21 black-and-white plates; numerous figures and line-drawings. ISBN 0-691-08569-2. Cloth £90.00.

When Dr Helmut Sick died in 1991, he was in the process of updating his original two-volume *Omitologia Brasileira* and having it translated from Portuguese into English by William Belton. *Birds in Brazil* is fundamentally a handbook, virtually the original work, now translated. The original colour plates by Paul Barruel have been supplemented with the work of John P. O'Neill. Weight precludes taking this tome into the field, so this is a volume to be digested from the armchair, prior to travelling to Brazil, and for reference on returning. Being a handbook, Sick deals with ecology, morphology, physiology: encompassing habits, plumage, vocalisations, taxonomy, distribution, conservation, etc. Such weighty subjects as these are dealt with in a conversational manner where personal observations and anecdotes make for pleasant reading.

The 'Family and species accounts' concern 1,635 species and form the bulk of this work, which deals sufficiently with the subjects, for the most part, though 'Distribution' could have been expanded. English names have kept abreast of the ever-changing views on nomenclature. The accounts of non-passerine families are excellent; those dealing with passerine groups are, in general, almost as good. The antbirds (Formicariidae) are, however, disappointing, which is regrettable, since they are in essence the South American family: many merely have their name listed or just the state in which they are found.

The original work, produced in the mid 1980s, was a milestone in Brazilian literature and of great credit to Helmut Sick. This treatise is better still, but could have been updated even more during the intervening period. In this respect, the credit for this volume should perhaps go especially to William Belton for his patience with translation. Anyone interested in going to Brazil for more than a token holiday should buy the book and will find it a worthy asset.

BRUCE C. FORRESTER

A Field Guide to the Waterbirds of Asia. By Bharat Bhushan, Graham Fry, Akira Hibi, Taej Mundkur, Dewi M. Prawiradilaga, Koichiro Sonobe and Shunji Usui. Illustrations by Takashi Taniguchi. (Wild Bird Society of Japan in collaboration with Asian Wetland Bureau, Tokyo, 1993. 224 pages. ISBN 4-7700-1740-5. Paperback £21.95) This attractive and well-produced pocket-sized guide covers 327 species of waterbird, encompassing cormorants, herons, bitterns, storks, wildfowl, rails, cranes, waders and gulls and terns, occurring within

Asia, defined here as the area from Pakistan east to Japan and Siberia and south to Indonesia (excluding Irian Jaya). The text is succinct yet quite detailed for the more difficult species, and the illustrations (86 colour plates) are of a high standard. There are no distribution maps, but a systematic list gives the status of all species by country. The book aims to promote interest in waterbirds and wetland habitats in the region. It will appeal to all Asian waterbird enthusiasts and complements other more general works on this region. IAIN ROBERTSON

Mountain Reflections. By **Keith Brockie.** (Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh, 1993. 128 pages. ISBN 1-85158-557-5. £17.50) Readers of Keith Brockie's previous books will be familiar with the style: a collection of delicate studies in pencil, wash and crayon. The Ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus* and the mountain hare *Lepus timidus* figure prominently; the work on Ptarmigan from egg to full-grown is particularly fascinating. Some pages would have benefited from a little more text (usually restricted to a few lines). There are some fully worked-up paintings, but the sketches of mountain hares within the first few pages are beautifully observed studies which truly delight.

ALAN HARRIS

Portrait of a Living Marsh: 32 international artists visit northeast Poland. By **Robin D'Arcy Shillcock.** (Inmere BV, The Netherlands, 1993. 192 pages. ISBN 90-6611-053-8. £25.00) What a marvellous idea! The Artists for Nature Foundation (ANF), in association with the World Wide Fund for Nature International, invited 32 internationally renowned wildlife artists to visit the Biebrza and Narew marshes in Poland for two weeks in spring 1992. This large-format book describes, with interesting text, magnificent photographs (mostly by Fred F. Hazellhoff) and a great variety of wonderful artwork, the habitats and wildlife of these wild areas in Eastern Europe. With 32 artists from 14 countries, it may be foolish to mention just a few in this review, but art appreciation is a personal matter, and my own favourites are Robert Bateman's Narew marsh, Vadim Gorbatov's elk crossing the Biebrza valley, Bruce Pearson's otter in morning mist, and Chris Rose's reflected cranes. This whole book provides a magnificent documentation of an inspired idea as well as a volume which every art-lover will wish to add to his or her collection; it is a very fine appreciation of an area of wonderful wildlife habitat which *must* be treasured and should be visited.

JTRS

Atlante degli uccelli svernanti in Lombardia. Edited by **Lorenzo Fornasari, Luciana Bottoni & Renato Massa.** (Regione Lombardia & Università degli Studi di Milano, 1992. 378 pages. No price given) This *Atlas of Wintering Birds in Lombardy* generally follows the methodology and format of our *Atlas of Wintering Birds in Britain and Ireland* (Lack 1986), using the same field period, 15th November to 28th February. The region of Lombardy in the very north of Italy has an area of about 23,800 km². Distribution within the 323 squares wholly or

partly within this area is shown in blue on a black base map for each species. Abundance is shown by four different sizes of symbol (plus one indicating 'present'). Even if one does not know this part of Italy, it is fascinating to compare and contrast the distributions of, for example, Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandria*, confined to the southern half of Lombardy, and Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, almost confined to the northern half, Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*, much commoner in the south, Common Redpoll *C. flammea*, almost confined to the north, and Goldfinch *C. carduelis*, found almost everywhere (92.9%). The text is *wholly* in Italian (though it is interesting to see that English names were apparently used by field-workers on the recording cards), but the standard format and very clear diagrams, histograms and graphs make it easy for anyone to use this atlas. There are, however, five wholly blank pages at the back, where brief résumés in English, French or German would probably have been widely appreciated. Production is first-rate, the traditional line-drawings are imaginative and lively, and the whole project is a great credit to all those responsible.

JTRS

Finding Birds in Southern Morocco. By **Dave Gosney.** (Gostours, Sheffield, 1993. 28 pages. ISBN 1-898-110-012. Paperback £4.00) Some bird-finding guides are lavishly produced with professional artwork, elegant maps and typesetting, and numerous line and half-tone illustrations. Usually, however, the most useful information is an informal sketch-map by a friend who has recently visited the area, annotated with his own personal comments and supplemented by second-hand notes from other birders. This Gostours booklet falls into the latter category – and is the better for it. It certainly fulfils its stated aim that 'the maps . . . present the information more clearly, more conveniently, or in more detail', and the caveat that they are 'up-to-date, at least for the time being' suggests that Dave Gosney realises the importance of regular revisions. His text also reveals his awareness that areas change from year to year: strangely, a basic fact not acknowledged by some guides – though there are still some generalisations formed from isolated experiences. This book contains a digest of information which will be invaluable to a first-time visitor to this most fascinating and exciting of birding locations, well worth the modest investment (which represents a fraction of the dirhams which a gullible visitor could waste on a local guide or his brother).

BRYAN BLAND



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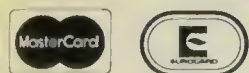
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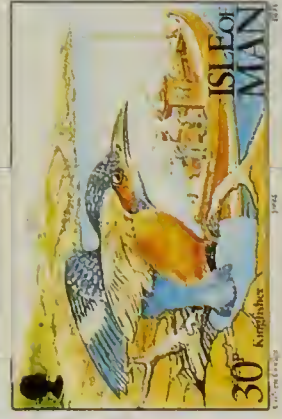
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White-throated Robin in the Isle of Man: new to Britain and Ireland

Adrian del Nevo

In the late afternoon of 22nd June 1983, J. R. Calladine, M. W. Watson and I were walking back to the observatory on the Calf of Man, Isle of Man. A movement caught my eye and alerted me to a small bird on top of a drystone wall, some 10 m away.

I gained a first impression of a small bird, rather like a Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, standing close to a fuchsia hedge, facing away from me. I commented 'Strewth! That's a funny-looking Wheatear—no, hang on—it's a chat.' JRC and MWW now saw the bird; JRC remarked that it had no white rump and MWW offered an expletive by way of querying what it was.

After a short time, the bird flew off along the wall and out of sight. We cautiously withdrew and awaited its return. MWW went to fetch telescopes and to open some mist-nets farther along the fuchsia hedge, while JRC and I furiously rechecked our observations in our notebooks and, between us, excluded several possibilities.

Within two or three minutes, the bird returned to its original position. It stood looking directly at us as we sat watching from less than 10 m, before it hopped off the wall into some nettles and out of sight. At this point, JRC asked 'What about White-throated Robin?'.

Struck by the enormity of this possibility, I agreed but did not dare to be too hopeful and desperately wanted 'just one more look'. MWW, returning with telescopes, twice saw the bird rise briefly from some braeken, but after several minutes, with no further sign of the bird, we agreed to spread out and search for it. I climbed onto the roof of a tractor shed to look down behind the wall.

After 10-15 minutes, I saw the bird fly across the farmyard. I attracted the other observers' attention, as we seemed to be 'back in business'. Unfortunately, despite a thorough search until dusk, and again the following morning, the bird was not seen again.

We were able quickly to eliminate North American and Far Eastern possibilities and come to the conclusion that we had indeed seen a White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*, the first record for Britain and Ireland.

Description

During the first ten-second view, we saw a small-looking chat-like bird, with a metallic blue-grey nape, mantle, back and rump (blue-grey, similar to male Northern Wheatear: JRC) contrasting with a seemingly wide, dark (brown/black) tail. There was no sign of white or other contrasting colours on the tail or rump. The bird stood alert and erect and turned sideways to reveal the edge of an orange/russet breast and, most notably, dark (black) lores and side to the head. There was a dark 'wedge' of black opening out from the bill to below the eye and covering the lower ear-coverts. (The lores and 'moustachial' region were dark grey, forming a solid wedge from the base of the bill and opening out across the ear-coverts: JRC).

The primaries and greater and median coverts appeared dark brown, similar to the background colour of the wings of a female Northern Wheatear. A relatively small, but obvious, off-white supercilium was broad in front of and immediately behind the eye, but extended only slightly behind it. There was no orbital ring apparent. The eyes and the bill both appeared dark, and the legs dark brown. The bill was one-third to one-half the length of the head, relatively broad at the base with a typically chat-like, 'bluntly-pointed' tip (JRC).

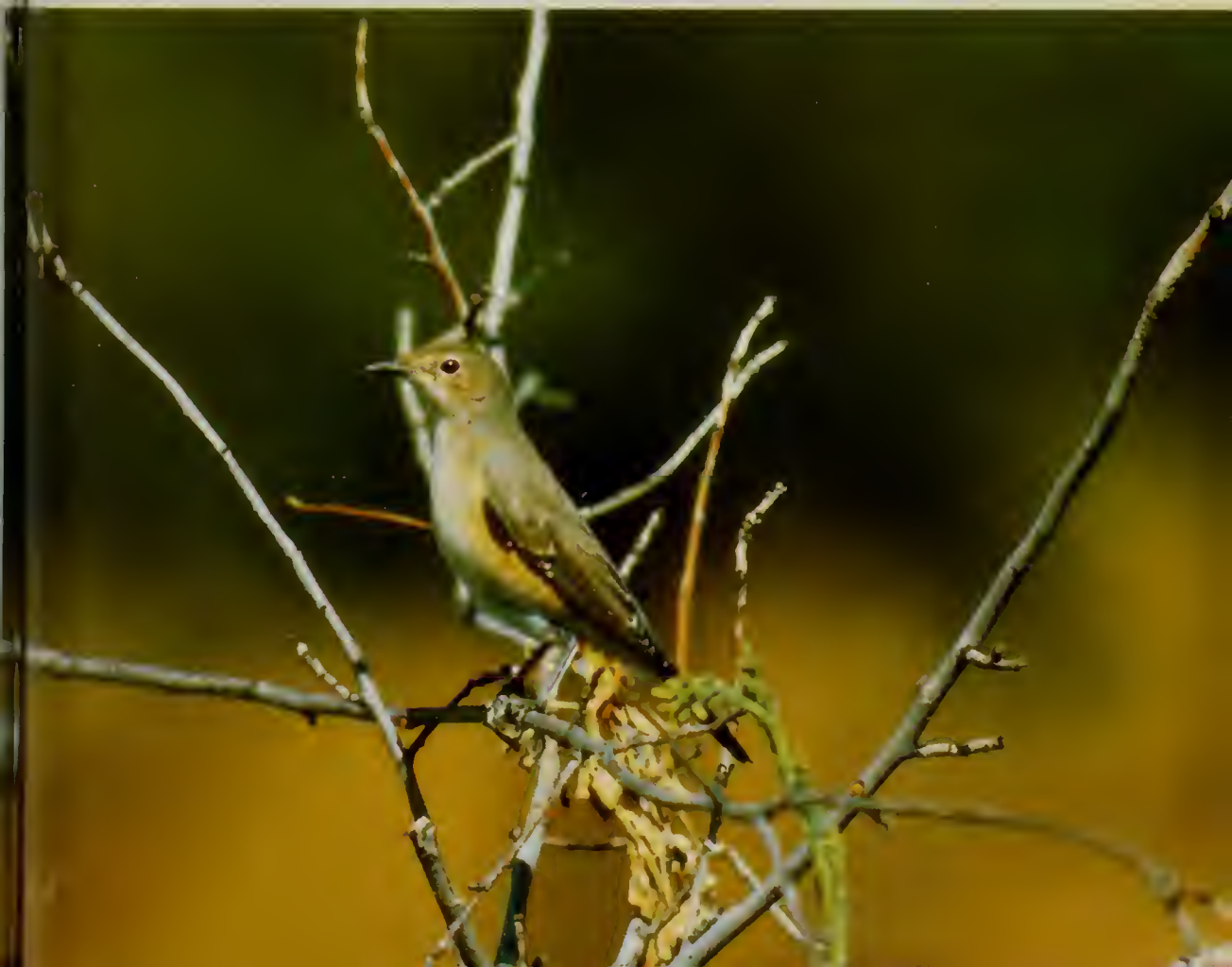
During the second view, of similar brevity, but with the bird fully visible at close range, we noted the orange/russet breast, fading to cream or off-white on the belly and undertail-coverts (undertail buffish: MWW), with somewhat paler flanks. The colour recalled that of a male Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* or Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. The chin and throat were brilliant white, making a triangular wedge broadening onto the lower throat/upper breast, creating a very marked contrast with the dark sides to the head and dark lores. The lower edge was sharp and strongly contrasted with the breast.

The bird looked long-legged (like a Robin *Erithacus rubecula*: AdN; longer-legged than Northern Wheatear: JRC). It appeared 'dumpy' in the first view, yet 'elongated', making size difficult to judge, but it appeared to be midway between a Robin and a Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* in size. There were no obvious wing flicks, tail flicks, bobbing or other actions, but its alert posture gave a 'stretched' appearance contrasting with the initial impression of dumpiness.

In flight, it looked stocky, with short wings, giving a flap-glide action like that of a Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. The 'thick' blackish tail gave the bird a solid impression and the contrasting orange underparts were very striking.



31. Male White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*, Turkey, May 1983 (Udo Pfriem)
32. Female White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*, Turkey, June 1988 (Kajetan Kravos)



The weather at the time of the observation was good, but there had been dense smoke, haze or fog a few hours earlier, reducing visibility from 20 km on 21st to just 2,800 m at midday on 22nd, but this quickly cleared again that evening. The wind was very light, southeasterly.

*Dr Adrian del Nevo, Research Department, RSPB, The Lodge,
Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL*

The White-throated Robin breeds from Turkey east to northern Iraq and Iran and winters in East Africa (mainly Kenya and Tanzania). Vagrants have occurred in Europe in France (two, Camargue, 17th April 1987), the Netherlands (3rd-4th November 1986), Norway (15th May 1981 and 17th August 1989) and Sweden (five records, the most recent being 10th May 1981, 10th May 1986 and 16th-20th May 1989). A second occurred in Britain, a female on Skokholm, Dyfed, on 27th-30th May 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 83: plate 295; 84: 482).

Rob Hume (Chairman, British Birds Rarities Committee) and Dr Alan Knox (Chairman, British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee) have commented as follows: 'The record was submitted to the Rarities Committee and unanimously accepted on first circulation (*Brit. Birds* 80: 551). Members commented that the brownish primaries could indicate a first-summer male, but this was not certain (although the brevity of the observations may have precluded any pale tips to primaries, secondaries and outer wing-coverts, which would confirm immaturity, from being noticed).

'The elongated appearance of the bird when alert was exactly right for this skulking species, and the difficulty of judging size was acknowledged, although the assessment did seem to some Committee members to be rather too small; others felt that the species can look small in the field, despite its actual length being rather greater than that of a Northern Wheatear. This minor problem aside, there was no doubt that the identification was fully established and there are no really serious confusion species.

'Identification was also accepted by the BOURC on a single circulation. With the exception of Tanzania, the countries noted in the range summary (above) are rarely involved in the cage-bird trade and the birds exported from Tanzania are apparently mainly seed-eaters. There are no records of White-throated Robin having been imported into Britain. The BOURC voted to add the species to Category A of the British and Irish List (*Ibis* 130: 335).' EDS



Announcement

Manx bird stamps SPECIAL OFFER The Isle of Man Post Office, which has sponsored the colour plates in the paper on White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* in this issue (pages 83-86), is making a special offer available to *British Birds* readers. The following postage stamps produced in co-operation with the Calf of Man Bird Observatory are being issued on 18th February 1991:

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Monthly marathon

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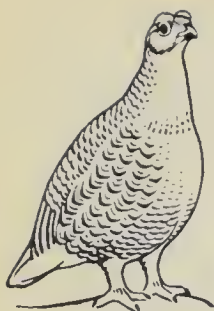
The back view of December's wader (*Brit. Birds* 86: plate 230) was named as: Sanderling *Calidris alba* (39%), Semipalmated Sandpiper *C. pusilla* (31%) and Little Stint *C. minuta* (27%), with a few votes for Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* and Western Sandpiper *C. mauri*.

It was the adult Semipalmated Sandpiper at the Abbey Pool on Tresco, Isles of Scilly, photographed in August 1993 by Ren Hathway (SCORE 69).

No competitor has achieved a faultless run, but the leaders at the moment are Paul Archer (SCORE 417), Anthony McGeehan (383), G. Rotzoll (373), Heikki Vasamies (358) and M. A. Harris (343). The first person to reach a score of 500 or more will win the SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, Asia or North America (see the full rules on page 29).



33. Sixth 'Monthly marathon'; thirteenth stage: photo no. 92. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 29 of the January issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th March 1994



Notes

Little Grebes 'flycatching' Towards dusk on 3rd April 1991, on the Gib-side estate, Tyne & Wear, I watched a pair of Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* catching flies. They moved around on the surface of an old fish pond at an extraordinary speed, snapping at flying insects 5-8 cm above the surface. At times, they would stretch to their full extent, rearing up out of the water to catch some prey item a little higher up. On at least two occasions, one of the grebes leapt out of the water, the lowest part of its body clearing the surface by some 15-20 cm. These leaps occurred from an almost 'standing start', the grebe not accelerating into them. *BWP* (vol. 1) does mention this feeding method as being regularly employed by this species, though I have on no other occasion seen Little Grebes feed in this frantic manner.

KEITH BOWEY

3 Alloy Terrace, Highfield, Rowlands Gill, Tyne & Wear NE39 2ND

Although this behaviour was mentioned in *BWP*, publication of this note is justified by the detail provided by Mr Bowey's observations. EDS

Great Cormorant scooping up water in flight At 07.30 GMT on 9th June 1991, at Benacre Broad, Suffolk, a party of Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* flew in from the sea and across the broad in a straight line about 3 m above the water, before turning southeast. As they slowed down and dropped lower, the leading bird dipped its head and neck and scooped up a billful of water, continuing to fly a further 40-50 m before alighting on the surface, when it simultaneously swallowed the water. The cormorant then proceeded to drink in the normal manner, before starting to fish.

C. A. JACOBS

24 Bruce Street, South Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 0HL

Common Teals showing mixed characters of Eurasian and North American races During the winter of 1990/91, excellent feeding conditions at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, produced a large influx of up to 5,500 Common Teals *Anas crecca*. Two of these were of the North American race *A. c. carolinensis* and two others showed mixed characters of the two races.

On 19th January, I saw a Common Teal at Denny Island which had a distinct vertical white stripe on the sides of the breast (although this was narrower than that shown by *carolinensis*) plus a prominent horizontal cream scapular line, similar to that shown by the nominate race. The breast colour seemed similar to that of *crecca* and not pinker as it is on *carolinensis*. It was seen only at long range, so details of the head pattern were not noted.

On 26th January, R. M. Andrews, M. C. Powell and I saw a different individual at Stratford Bay, at the other end of the lake. This one showed a very narrow vertical white breast line, broken on the right side. On the scapulars, it had an inconspicuous, short, white line above the black one, more prominent on the left side. Buff edgings to the green head stripe recalled *crecca*, but a deeper pink breast recalled *carolinensis*.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from these birds is that they were intergrades between the two races, a possibility which seems highly likely now that small numbers of male (and, presumably, also female) *carolinensis* are resident on this side of the Atlantic. The first individual obviously showed mixed characters, but those of the second were altogether more subtle. Fortunately, it was seen at close range, but, at any distance, the white on the scapulars would have been invisible.

This individual highlights the need to exercise a degree of caution when identifying *carolinensis* in Europe: clearly all the identification features should be noted. The most obvious difference from *carolinensis* was that the vertical breast stripe was much narrower. It should be noted, however, that, even on pure *carolinensis*, the stripe can appear quite narrow for a short period during the moult from eclipse or from juvenile/first-winter plumage before the white feathers are fully grown. In this context, it may also be worth noting that adults seem to moult from eclipse about a month earlier (late September onwards) than young birds moult from juvenile/first-winter (late October onwards). Also, adults complete their moult more quickly, so that they may be in full plumage by mid October, whereas first-years may still retain obvious traces of brown juvenile/first-winter plumage in mid January.

K. E. VINICOMBE

11 Kennington Avenue, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 9EU

Dr M. A. Ogilvie has commented: 'Intergrades between *crecca* and *carolinensis* have been reported several times from North America (Palmer 1976) on both sides of the continent. The breeding range of *crecca* extends eastwards to islands in the Bering Strait, where the migratory *carolinensis* is of regular occurrence. Resident birds in the Aleutian Islands have been described as a third race, *nimia*, clearly derived from *crecca*, but averaging larger. Intergrades presumably emanating from this area have been seen on a number of occasions wintering as far south as California.

Vagrant *crecca*, presumably from Iceland, is regular on the eastern seaboard of North America, where the sight of males of both *crecca* and *carolinensis* displaying to the same female is quoted by Palmer as being "not a very rare sight in spring".' EDS

REFERENCE

PALMER, R. (ed.) 1976. *Handbook of North American Birds*. vol. 2. New Haven & London.

Interspecific aggression among wildfowl At 18.30 hours on 2nd April 1991, from a hide in the Parc Nationale S'Albufera, Mallorca, I watched a female Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* with ten ducklings feeding on a marshland pool, with a pair of Garganeys *A. querquedula* apparently roosting 20-25 m away. Suddenly, the drake Garganey looked around and quickly proceeded through the shallows towards the ducklings. He swam past the first three or four, which moved aside but continued feeding unconcernedly, and attacked one in the middle of the party. The duckling attempted to escape, but the

Garganey pressed home his attack. The rest of the family scattered, and the female Mallard became agitated as the Garganey chased the fleeing duckling for some 20-30 seconds through rushes and marginal vegetation, with the female Mallard anxiously following the activity and calling to her brood. She chased off into the vegetation, but the Garganey had apparently lost interest; when I glanced up again, he was already back in his original position, quietly preening beside his mate. The whole incident probably lasted less than 50 seconds, and appeared to take place without provocation or reason. Over a number of years of observing wildfowl, I have also noted aggressive behaviour by Common Teals *A. crecca* towards Mallards, and reciprocal aggression between Gadwalls *A. strepera* and Eurasian Wigeons *A. penelope*. By contrast, the diving ducks of the genus *Aythya*, which regularly occur in large mixed flocks, seem for the most part to get by with much lower levels of aggression and general bickering.

KEITH BOWEY

3 Alloy Terrace, Highfield, Rowlands Gill, Tyne & Wear NE39 2ND

Dr Colin J. Bibby has commented that the Garganey was presumably defending its feeding prospects, rather than indulging in 'pointless aggression', and the same may apply to other instances of aggressive behaviour between surface-feeding ducks. EDS

Unusual behaviour of Northern Lapwing On a bright sunny morning on 8th March 1991, outside Burford, Oxfordshire, I saw four Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* flying in a ragged circle over a flooded meadow beside the River Windrush. While about 8 m high, one of them, with wings held high, went into a steep dive, hitting the water with an impressive splash. It then swam vigorously for about 3 m to an unsubmerged patch of grass, where it bathed for a minute or so before flying off to join the others. The depth of the water, which I checked, made swimming unavoidable.

DEREK BARBER

Chough House, Gretton Road, Gotherington, near Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 4QU

This was perhaps a misjudged landing, in water that proved to be not so shallow as the wader expected, rather than an instance of deliberate bathing. EDS

Aggressive behaviour of Northern Lapwing towards corpse of Black-headed Gull At 07.15 GMT on 28th May 1991, at Priory Park, Bedford, I was watching two pairs of Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, one pair with two chicks and the second with one. While watching the chicks, which were about four days old, I was surprised to see a male lapwing dive down and attack the corpse of a Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, knocking it about 30 cm along the ground. The lapwing performed seven series of such attacks in 12 minutes, during which it hit the dead gull forcibly with its bill a total of 42 times, on several occasions knocking it into the air; the average time between individual attacks was seven seconds (longest interval 26.6 seconds, shortest 2.0 seconds). Interestingly, although the corpse had lain about 25 cm from the nest for 11 days, it had not elicited any aggressive response before the eggs hatched. It is well known that some species will

attack dead birds, or parts of them, but I can find no reference to such behaviour by the Northern Lapwing.

DAVID KRAMER

7 Little Headlands, Putnoe, Bedford MK41 8JT

Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented that the greatest interest is that the adult's behaviour changed after the eggs hatched. EDS

River Warbler reacting to mowing machine On 28th May 1990, at the Marchegg Reserve, eastern Austria, many male River Warblers *Locustella fluviatilis* were singing, though they were almost impossible to see. Just before our group left, we were sitting on a floodbank opposite a thick morass of riverside growth listening to yet another invisible River Warbler when a small, hideously noisy tractor came along mowing hay, passing less than 30 cm from the singing warbler. As we turned to go, the River Warbler crawled to the very top of a low, bare bush and poured forth its song just a short distance away and in full view. Three times it skulked back, and three times it reappeared to give a vintage performance, each time immediately after the mower went by on its regular circuit.

PETER DAVIES

42 Radnor Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 0PH

It is not uncommon for warblers and other species to react to loud noises or other disturbances by singing, but in this instance the repeated reaction of the River Warbler is of interest. EDS

Spotted Flycatchers feeding young Wrens On 25th June 1990, Mrs Rosemary Helme informed me of exceptional behaviour by a pair of Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata* towards a pair of Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* sharing the same nest site on her house in Summerbridge, North Yorkshire. The following account is compiled from a daily log kept by Mrs Helme, with some additions from my own notes.

The two nests formed a single structure just over 2 m up in wisteria *Wisteria* growing on a stone pillar by the front door; the flycatchers' nest was several centimetres above and slightly to one side of the entrance to the Wrens' nest, both being in view at eye level from a window 1.25 m away. The Wrens had been feeding young for a week when the flycatchers' eggs hatched. About this time, the flycatchers began to show hostility towards the adult Wrens, and appeared to be trying to drive them away. The Wrens persisted for some days, one managing to slip in with food while its mate was harassed by one or other of the flycatchers. From the morning of 25th June, however, no adult Wrens were seen near the nest, although their young were still being fed, but by one of the flycatchers.

When I arrived in the evening of 25th, the young Wrens had flown and were being fed in a nearby bush by one Spotted Flycatcher, while the other brooded their own small young in the nest; at dusk, seven Wrens gathered in a huddle on a window ledge, where one flycatcher continued to feed them. On 2nd July, all seven were still being fed together in the garden by one flycatcher, while the latter's mate continued to feed its five nestlings; so far, the young Wrens had shown no serious attempts to forage for themselves. On 7th July, three young Spotted Flycatchers fledged: that afternoon, two young

Wrens persistently followed an adult flycatcher and begged for food, the same flycatcher being seen to feed these Wrens and also its own young; in the evening, an adult flycatcher ignored the begging Wrens, and an adult Wren was singing close by. Wrens were last noticed in the garden on 12th July, when up to three were seen foraging; both adult Spotted Flycatchers appeared to be feeding their own young, but were not seen to feed the Wrens. By 22nd July, the flycatchers had laid again in the same nest. D. W. SWINDELLS

3 Dale Close, Hampsthwaite, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG3 2EQ

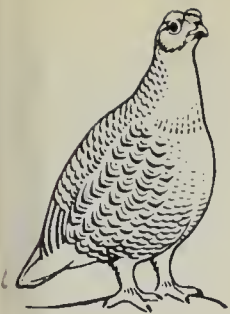
There have, of course, been many other such instances of interspecific feeding of young (e.g. female Wren feeding young Great Tits *Parus major*, *Brit. Birds* 83: 400-401), but the careful observations by Mrs Helme and Mr Swindells are especially useful and detailed. EDS

Common Starling attacking and grounding Common Swift The note on the grounding of a Common Swift *Apus apus* by a Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (*Brit. Birds* 83: 122-123) interested me. During mid May in 1985 and 1986, I noticed similar behaviour when I lived in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire. After finding a Common Starling attacking a Common Swift on the road, I watched to see how the former managed to capture the much faster swift. My house was at the end of a row and at an oblique angle to the adjacent building. The starling would wait at the narrowest point between the buildings and actively look for approaching swifts; as one screamed through the gap, it would launch itself into its path and attempt to grab it. On several occasions over the two years, the Common Starling was successful. Both species nested in our building, and there was also circumstantial evidence that this same or another Common Starling was interfering directly with the nests of the swifts.

BRIAN HENSHAW

Box 86, Brooklin, Ontario, 0EB 1C0, Canada

Derek Goodwin has commented: 'I suspect that the basic reason for the starlings' hostility is connected with nest-site competition. Here [Orpington, Kent], starlings persistently attack Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* when they can do so from above or behind.' EDS



Big boost for Biodiversity Projects

AT AN RSPB CONFERENCE in early November, Environment Secretary John Gummer announced that 26 projects were to be funded—to the tune of £3.3 million—under the Government's Darwin Initiative. This sounds like a good start: the Initiative began at the Rio Earth Summit as a means of funding British organisations to work in collaboration with organisations and individuals abroad, in those countries which are rich in biodiversity but lacking in financial resources. Museums, research bodies, universities and voluntary conservation organisations all feature in the round of funding just announced. More applications are under consideration – and more will be welcomed: £6 million is available for allocation during the first three years of the Initiative. To find out more, write to Environment Protection International Division, Department of the Environment, A304, Romney House, 43 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3PY.

More and more protected sites

Hard on the heels of the news that the New Forest has been made a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds comes word of similar categorisation for Salisbury Plain, still famous for its Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicephalus*, among other things. It seems anomalous that the Plain owes much of its value as a prime wildlife site to the fact that much of it is a restricted area under military use—but that is the case. The Ministry of Defence actually has a very good record for its wildlife conservation efforts in several parts of the country.

Malham Tarn, in North Yorkshire, is much less well known. We were pleased to note that it has become the sixty-eighth 'Ramsar Site' in the UK – a designation recognising its international importance as a wetland.

Ford Award

Our congratulations to the Forestry Commission, which has won the coveted 1993 Ford European Conservation Award for its imaginative pioneering work in restoring and conserving the ancient Atlantic woodlands it manages in Argyll. The knowledge and expertise gained from this work on broadleaf woodlands will have application elsewhere.

This is one more demonstration of the Commission's commitment to things which go beyond the mere production of timber. As we have remarked before, it is this broader remit which seems to us to be threatened by privatisation: it is a question not so much of whether private owners *could* follow the Commission's lead as of whether they would *want* to.

Action plan recognition

Among the 14 organisations which will receive EC funding under the Community's LIFE programme in 1993, we were pleased to note the names of BirdLife International and the RSPB. Funding is being provided for their joint work on producing action plans for globally threatened bird species and protection

measures for Corn Crakes *Crex crex* in Europe. Those not immediately involved in the day-to-day work of our main bird-conservation bodies probably know very little about 'action plans' and the immense amount of detailed work involved in them. It is encouraging to see them gaining some formal recognition—and support.

IWC at Howth

The Irish Wildbird Conservancy celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in style at its *IWC Expo '93* in Dublin during 19th-21st November 1993.

The Conference was opened by the Republic's President, Uachtaran na hEireann, Mary Robinson, who demonstrated sympathy with and considerable knowledge of the IWC's work and aims. She quoted from Gerard Manley Hopkins' 'The Windhover':

'The achieve of, the mastery of the thing!'
and emphasised 'the achieve of' in relation to the IWC's first 25 years. Mary Robinson then toured the Expo stands, although she did not attempt to win *BB's* bottle of champagne (plate 34).

Speakers covered a great variety of subjects. First was Richard Mills, 1981 winner of *BB's* Bird Photograph of the Year award, who, as photographer with *The Cork Examiner*, had covered the Irish President's recent trip to Somalia, and who had also seen some birds there and in adjoining Kenya. Clive Hutchinson reviewed the IWC's 25-year history. Dr Adrian del Nevo took anthropomorphism to its extreme by using members of his audience to act as nestling Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* being fed

by their parents in the Azores and on Rockabill Island. Anthony McGeehan revealed why he is now (slightly) less of a twitcher than he was once. D. I. M. Wallace compared now with then in 'Fifty years in the field', including teenage agonies such as Grey Phalaropes *Calidris alba* (sic). Bruce Pearson, 1984 winner of *BB's* Bird Illustrator of the Year award, explained wildlife art (his and others'); Trevor Gunton took us through Europe with birds and their hazards; and Richard Collins revealed how interesting even Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* can be.

The Howth Lodge Hotel provided superb facilities (and seafood); the nearby mudflats and North Bull Island provided extraordinarily close views of unconcerned geese, ducks and waders; and Dave Allen provided a long and entertaining table quiz to follow the Conference dinner (which ended at 1.30 a.m.). *BB's* mystery photographs quiz produced 19 all-correct entries, the winner of the draw being Ben Phalan.

The planning and organisation by Oran O'Sullivan and his team was immaculate, resulting in a conference acclaimed by participants as the best ever. (JTRS)



34. The President of the Republic of Ireland, Mary Robinson, with IWC Chairman, Jim Wilson, at *IWC Expo '93*, Dublin, November 1993 (Richard T. Mills)

A cause to grouse—or not?

On average, about 450,000 Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* are shot in Britain each year, according to the Game Conservancy's recent publication *Grouse in Space and Time*. This figure actually represents a decrease of 40% over the last 40 years. The report contains additional fascinating statistics. There are only some 15% of the upland gamekeepers employed today compared with 100 years ago, but in the last 30 years numbers of foxes *Vulpes vulpes* and Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* killed on grouse

moors has risen significantly. One particularly interesting fact to emerge was that the breeding density of the European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* increases with the intensity of the grouse management. The long-term decline in the grouse numbers is firmly linked to the loss of heather moorland caused by over-grazing, particularly by sheep. Is it a choice between rows of planted conifer trees, rows of sheep or rows of men with guns (on just a few days of the year)?

'Birds of Gateshead'

Published by Gateshead Council's Department of Leisure Services, this book may be the first of its kind—an account in the best traditions of county avifaunas, but covering a single borough. It was written by three keen local birders, Keith Bowey, Steve Rutherford and Steve Westerberg, all employed by Gateshead Council as wardens. A thoroughly researched 83-page systematic list of the 237 species so far recorded is enhanced with a section on the main localities, including grid references, where to park, and so on. Separate lists of species which almost made it into Gateshead, and escapes which did, are appended. An interesting innovation is a list of predictions, even suggesting localities and seasons. The predicted first-year-male spring Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* duly appeared on 28th May 1993.

Even if you never expect to set foot in

Gateshead, this is a fascinating book to pore through. The first Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* and Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator* for Britain were both shot there one-and-a-half centuries ago. Perhaps even more remarkable was the White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* which was not shot. This wintered on the Ravensworth estate in 1835, and Lord Ravensworth wrote at the time 'we treated him with hospitality . . . I have seen him a score of times.' If only the modern gamekeepers of the Durham grousemoors were as hospitable to Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* and Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo*.

Obtainable for £6.00 (incl. p&p; make cheques payable to Gateshead MBC) from Thornley Woodlands Centre, near Rowlands Gill, Tyne & Wear NE39 1AU. (Contributed by Dave Britton)

Improved protection for Irish mammals

Ireland is not well known for its mammalian diversity—indeed, many of the familiar species found in Britain are absent. It is pleasing to note, however, that Ireland has become the fifth country to ratify the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe—good news for Ireland's seven species of breeding bat. At the same time, the UK and Irish governments are discussing extending the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Sea so as to include the Irish Sea and nearby waters.

Cash help for forest studies

In late October, Forest Enterprise (the management arm of the Forestry Commission) announced a trial scheme to provide cash assistance for amateur naturalists studying wildlife in the Commission's woodlands in England. Up to £200 per project is available for such things as bird-rings, moth-traps, bat-boxes and even film and travel costs. More details from local Forest Enterprise offices, or Forest Enterprise at Avon Fields House, Somerdale, Keynsham, Bristol (0272 869481), or at 1A Grosvenor Terrace, York (0904 620221).

Gullivers travels

We could not avoid mentioning this one. Nothing whatsoever to do with Mr Swift *Apus apus*, but Mr & Mrs Gulliver who have started organising natural history tours. Lilliput and Brobdingnag are not included in their

programme, which concentrates on short trips (most are of eight days) to sites in Europe. More information on Heath and Reach (0525) 270100.

New RSPB Chairman

John Lawton FRS, Professor of Community Ecology at Imperial College, London, and Director of the NERC Centre for Population Biology at Silwood Park, Berkshire, has succeeded Adrian Darby as the RSPB's new Chairman. His association with the Society goes back to his boyhood and more recently he has been an active and valued member of RSPB Council. We wish him well.

New President for BTO

At its AGM in December, the BTO elected Sir William Wilkinson to replace the retiring President, Richard Howard.

Sir William was Chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council for nine years until its dismemberment in 1991, was one of the founders of the Ornithological Society of Turkey (which subsequently evolved into OSME) and is Chairman of the company responsible for *BLUP*.

We wish enjoyable and productive futures for Richard, Sir William and the BTO.

New Honorary Subscriber

We are delighted to announce that, on 9th December 1993, the Editorial Board unanimously elected Professor Dr Karel H. Voous as an Honorary Subscriber, in recognition of his great services to European and world ornithology.

Prof. Dr Voous joins a select group of eminent ornithologists who are Honorary Subscribers to *British Birds*: I. J. Ferguson-Lees, P. A. D. Hollom, E. M. Nicholson, Major R. F. Rutledge, P. O. Swanberg and D. I. M. Wallace.

Fortieth Norfolk report

Not only Norfolk's fortieth, but also Michael Seago's fortieth as editor. A bumper issue celebrates these events, with over 100 pages on birds and 18 on mammals, plus over 50 colour photographs, mostly of famous Norfolk rarities such as the 1987 Slender-billed Gulls *Larus genei* and the 1989-90 Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*, and a complete Norfolk bird checklist, with status notes. A collector's item, and great value at £4.50 (plus 50p p&p); available from Mrs M. Dorling, 6 New Road, Hethersett, Norfolk NR9 3HH.

'Birds of Greece'

G. Handrinos and T. Akriotis are currently preparing a book on the birds of Greece, covering past and present status, distribution, habitats and conservation. In view of the small number of birdwatchers and ornithologists living in Greece, any records supplied by visitors will be most helpful.

All contributions will be acknowledged. Please write to G. Handrinos, El. Venizelou 44, 16675 Glyfada, Greece.

New goose reserve

The RSPB has announced its purchase of Mershead Farm, not far from Southerness on the north shore of the Solway Firth. It comprises 282 ha of farmland and saltmarsh and is particularly well known for the 5,000 Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* which use the farmland and for its large wader roosts. Once the reserve is fully established, there will be good opportunities to re-create wet grassland and shallow pools on the currently drained areas, and perhaps to create reedbeds—a scarce habitat in southern Scotland.

Yemen Expedition

A preliminary report on the OSME expedition to Southern Yemen and Socotra (spring 1993) is now available, price £3 (incl. p&p), from Richard Porter, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Windrush meadows flood again

Reconstruction of the complicated combination of weirs, carriages, sluices and drawns is restoring the traditional water-meadow system to part of the River Windrush in Gloucestershire. The aim is for this to be managed for modern agriculture and to make the experiment pay. Benefits to wildlife and the interest of a restored traditional farming method are bonuses. The first flooding will be tried this spring.

The experiment is described by Euan Dunn in the Christmas 1993 issue of *The Countryman*, itself an English tradition, now in its 99th year. For subscription or back-number details, write to The Countryman, 120-126 Lavender Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey CR1 3HP.

BTO December Swanwick

The BTO's annual pre-Christmas get-together at The Hayes Conference Centre at Swanwick, Derbyshire, was as usual enjoyable, entertaining and educational in equal measure. All was good (apart from one meal, which took me back to my war-time schooldays), but the highlights were Bob Scott's talk 'Vaguely about migration', especially his Russian bear story; Norman Elkins's exemplary explanation of weather maps and of how weather helps or hinders migrants; Dr Peter Berthold's brilliant, enthralling and masterly account of 'Blackcap City' at Vogelwarte Radolfzell and his institute's work on Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* and redstarts *Phoenicurus*; and John Callion's account of his thought-provoking findings from his Cumbrian studies of Common Stonechats *Saxicola torquata*. Stephen Rumsey impressed us all with the scale of his internationally supported ringing studies in Senegal; and

D. I. M. Wallace showed that enthusiasm and regular watching can reveal many real surprises even at local patches well inland.

Eleven entrants (Muriel Cadwallender, Andrew Carter, Martin Davison, Mike Denton, James Gloyn, Mark Golley, Tim Inskipp, David Jardine, John Marchant, Mick Rogers and Peter Wilkinson) supplied all-correct answers in the 'BB' mystery photographs competition, and David Jardine won the draw for the bottle of champagne. Dr Alan Knox's 'Grisly Quiz' was also won (for the third consecutive year) by David Jardine, who gallantly waived his right to the prize in favour of Nigel Clark, who won the draw from among the three runners-up. Perhaps the most difficult competition of all was Keith Betton's birdsound quiz, won with a tie between Rachel Warren and Dennis White. (JTRS)

'Bird Watching' highlights

The February issue of the monthly magazine *Bird Watching* includes Lee Evans's 'Top ten birds of 1993'; identification features on Britain's owls, bitterns and gulls; a new series, 'Cape to Cape': follow the adventures of birder Jos Stratford as he journeys to Africa; Ian Wallace relives the late 1970s in his personal highly readable history of British ornithology; and 'County Call' on Cardigan, stronghold of the Red Kite *Milvus milvus*.

Bird Watching is available at most bookstalls, or by subscription from Bird Watching Subscriptions, Tower Publishing Services Ltd, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 9EF.

Manx bird stamps

We draw readers' attentions to the new postage stamps featuring bird designs produced by the Manx Post Office in association with the Calf of Man Bird Observatory (see page xi) and the special offer to 'BB' subscribers (see page 86).

The Manx Post Office has generously supported the paper in this issue on the White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* on the Calf of Man (see pages 83-86) by paying for the inclusion of the two colour photographs of the species (plates 31 & 32).

Venetian blind to bird laws

An Italian out shooting geese was fined £200 at Perth Sheriff Court on 12th November 1993. The surprising thing is that he did not shoot a thing, but was caught using a tape-recorder with a powerful loudspeaker. There appears to have been a dispute in Court about what was on the tape—goose calls or, as the Italian claimed, songs of small birds. It was said in his defence that such tape-lures could be used legally in Italy, but he even got that wrong—it is totally illegal.

We assume that the person who did hear the tape was not a BB reader, as he describes it as sounding like 'Orville the Duck'. Finally, we gladly acknowledge that *The Glasgow Herald* was responsible for dreaming up the headline to this item. (Contributed by Frank Hamilton)

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

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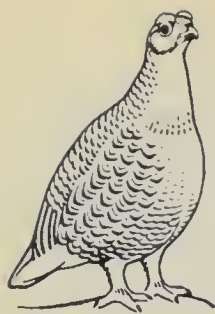
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Don Taylor—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

John Wilson—Northwest



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period to 4th-16th January 1994

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Stithians Reservoir (Cornwall), still present to 16th January; wandering Northumberland individual last seen at Holywell Ponds, still present to 16th January.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* East Aberthaw (South Glamorgan), 8th January.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* Caerlaverock (Dumfries & Galloway), still present to 16th January; Wallasea Island (Essex), to at least 13th January.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* Pair, Castle Caldwell (Co. Fermanagh), 1st-16th January (the third winter out of the last four that they have been present).

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* Male, Clonea Lake (Co. Cork), 16th January.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* Individual of North American race *americana* picked up oiled and taken into care at Blackpool (Lancashire), 5th January.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* Individual, apparently not wing-tagged, outside Newcastle (Co. Down), from 30th December 1993 to 16th January.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* Fairburn Ings (North Yorkshire), 4th-16th January.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Titchwell (Norfolk), still present to 16th January.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* Fen Drayton (Cambridgeshire), still present to 16th January.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* Fishguard Harbour (Dyfed), 10th-11th January.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* Near Winchcombe (Gloucestershire), from 9th January.

Olive-backed Pipit *A. hodgsoni* Pitsea (Essex), 13th-16th January.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* Individual of black-throated race *atrogularis*, Bournemouth (Dorset), 7th January.

European Serin *Serinus serinus* Ramsgate (Kent), 5th-10th January.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* Unst (Shetland), 16th January.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* Near Mullion (Cornwall), 15th January.

Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* Up to 12 wintering at Gormanston (Co. Meath).



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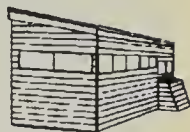
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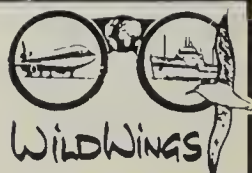
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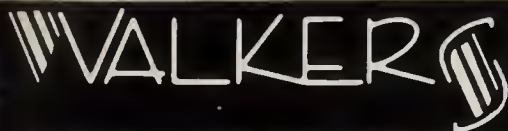
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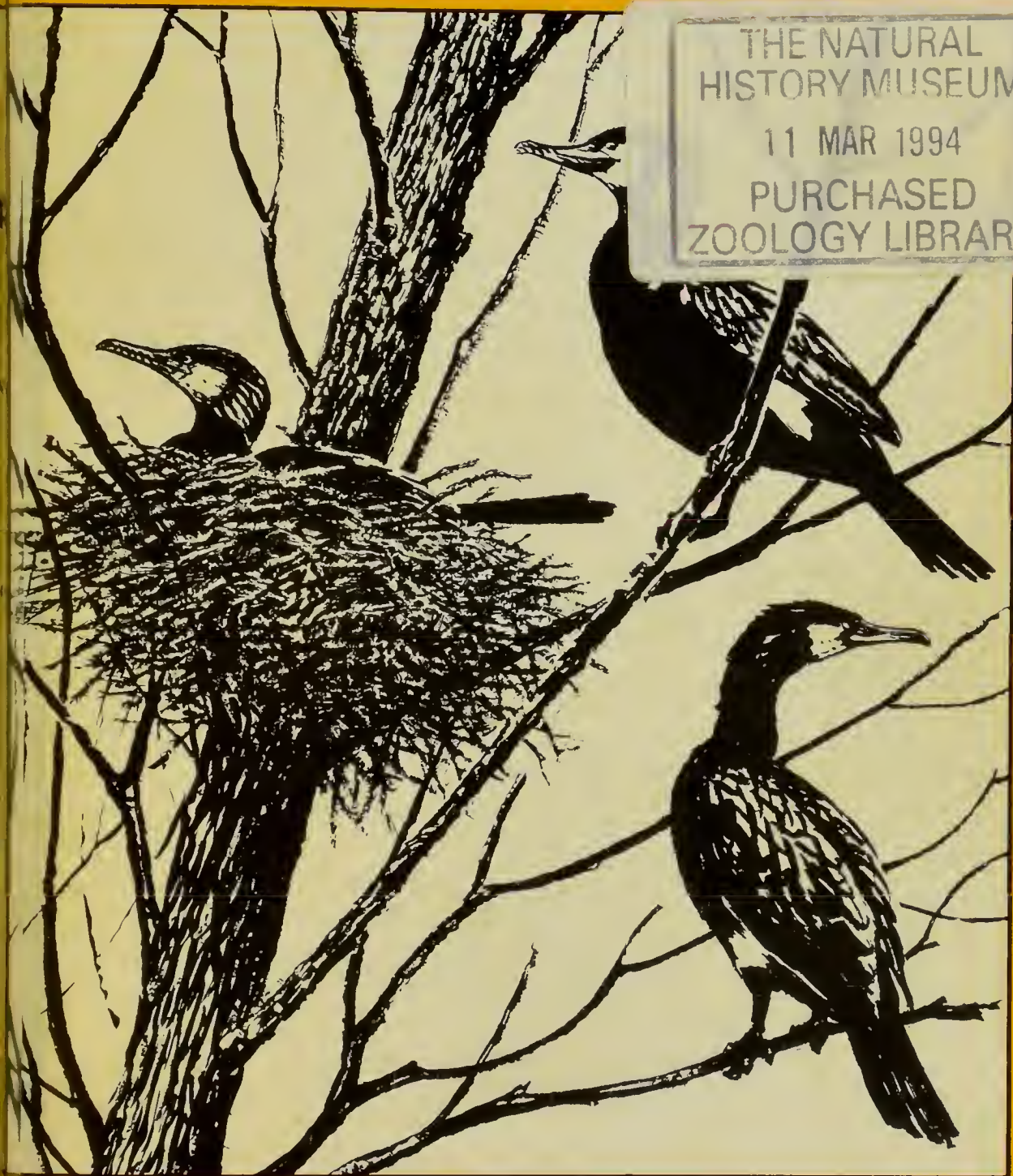
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Front cover: Purple Herons relay-fishing, the changeover (*John Holbyer*); the original drawing of this month's cover design, measuring 18.5 × 20.8 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 32 in January issue for procedure)

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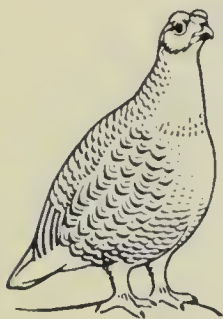
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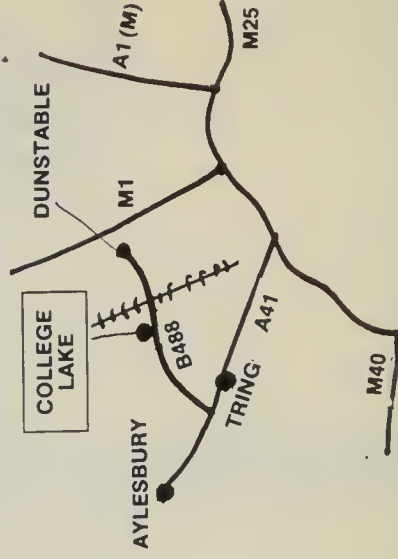
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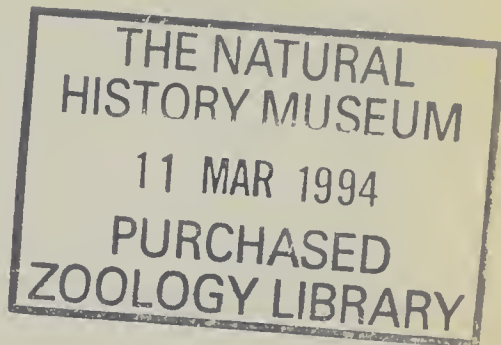
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British Birds

VOLUME 87 NUMBER 3 MARCH 1994



Identification of jackdaws and choughs

Steve Madge

Illustrated by Hilary Burn

These four small crows are similar in size and all overlap in range and habitat to a certain extent. Separating jackdaws from choughs is only a marginal problem involving poorly seen birds, but each pair of species presents some interesting problems. This short paper reviews the identification of Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus* and compares the two species of chough *Pyrrhocorax*.

Separating the jackdaws

Daurian Jackdaw is the eastern counterpart of our familiar Eurasian Jackdaw *C. monedula*, which it replaces to the east and southeast of Lake Baikal. Despite the striking plumage differences between adults of the two jackdaws, they are clearly very closely related and form a species-pair. There is a good case for lumping them as one polymorphic species, but there is little evidence of hybridisation where the two forms marginally meet (in the region of Lake

Baikal and in Mongolia). The difference in eye colour may be an important factor in preventing other than very occasional mixed pairings, and their nesting habits may also differ marginally.

Both jackdaws are strongly migratory over large areas of their ranges and it is therefore not surprising that some vagrancy occurs. Vagrant Eurasian Jackdaws have occurred as far east as Japan, and have crossed the Atlantic to the Canary Islands and even the eastern seaboard of North America. Daurian Jackdaws have been recorded west to Krasnoyarsk in central Siberia, south-west to Uzbekistan in central Asia and exceptionally in Finland and Sweden.

Daurian Jackdaws have two colour phases, which may in fact be entirely age-related, although more intensive field research is required to sort this out for certain. Known vagrants have all been of pied individuals, but the black phase, which is confusingly similar to Eurasian Jackdaw, is an immature plumage stage and vagrants are perhaps much more likely to turn up in this easily overlooked plumage than as pied adults.

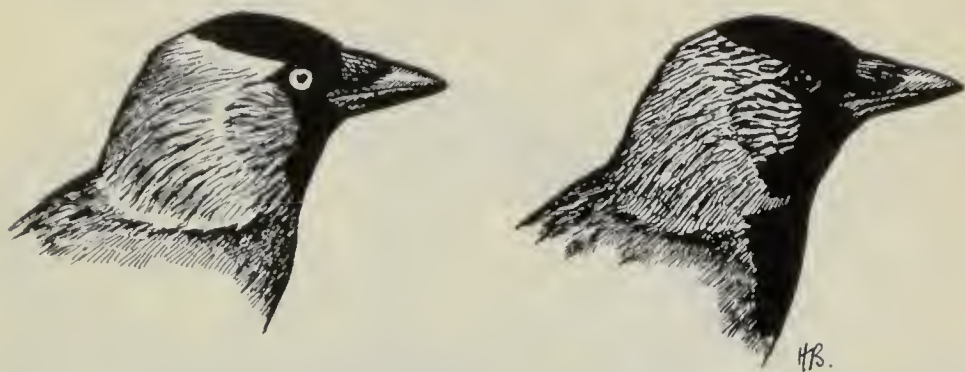


Fig. 1. Foreparts of Eurasian *Corvus monedula* (left) and dark-stage (immature) Daurian Jackdaws *C. dauricus* (right). Note dark irides, silver streaking on sides of head and more extensive black on throat and breast of Daurian (*Hilary Burn*)

Piebald Daurian Jackdaws

The well-known piebald phase presents a very distinctive appearance, the basic pattern of which recalls a miniature 'hooded' Carrion Crow *C. corone cornix*, with whitish underparts and collar contrasting with blackish head, breast, undertail-coverts, wings, upperparts and tail. With suspected vagrants, the more likely possibility of a bird being a partial albino Eurasian Jackdaw should be considered, but Daurian has a dark (not pale) iris and fine silver streaking on the sides of the head behind the eye. Individuals in this plumage stage are otherwise quite unmistakable and are invariably adults.

Black Daurian Jackdaws

The black phase is an immature plumage stage and seems not to be exhibited by either full adults or juveniles. This confusing situation suggested to some authorities that a third species of jackdaw existed, which was named *C. neglectus*. Whether or not all immatures are black is unclear, as this complex ageing process has only relatively recently been clarified by Russian researchers (summarised by Jollie 1985). Basically, it seems that the short-lived juvenile plumage is piebald (recalling a dull version of the adult), but soon after fledging a moult of the head and body plumage produces the black plumage stage, which is retained throughout the winter and at least into the



35. Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*, Mongolia, June 1981 (Peter Kennerley)

following summer, perhaps until the bird is in its third calendar-year.

Black-phase individuals are very similar to Eurasian Jackdaw, but are more uniformly blackish, with the nape a relatively darker grey than on Eurasian Jackdaw. Like pied individuals, the iris is dark, but the area of silver streaking behind the eye is rather less extensive, though it should be visible as a lighter area under close scrutiny. A major pitfall in late summer is produced by juvenile Eurasian Jackdaws, which also have a dark iris and a darker-grey and less-contrasting nape than adults. The first moult (only a few weeks after fledging), however, gives an appearance virtually identical to that of adults, although the irides sometimes remain dark well into the first winter, possibly even until the first spring on some individuals. A jackdaw with a darkish nape and iris in late autumn and winter is, therefore, a good candidate for Daurian.

In good light, another useful clue is given by the contrasting blacker throat and upper-breast pattern (a 'ghost' of the pattern of the pied adult stage). On Eurasian Jackdaw, the throat is blacker than the breast, whereas on Daurian the black extends onto the upper breast and forms a more extensive shield (reminiscent of 'hooded' Carrion Crow), which contrasts slightly with the dull blackish of the remainder of the underparts. By their first spring, Daurian Jackdaws may start to acquire pale areas on the nape; from my limited studies in the field in June in Siberia, it seems that the pale feathering first becomes apparent on the upper nape and spreads downwards, thus producing the reverse of the nape pattern of Eurasian Jackdaws (which, especially those in eastern populations, often have a narrow whitish area at the base of the nape).



36. Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*, Mongolia, June 1981 (Peter Kennerley)

Other differences

Both jackdaws are extremely similar in behaviour, calls, size and shape. There is, however, a tendency for Daurian to have the second primary shorter than the fifth (equal on Eurasian) and for its first primary to be relatively a little shorter than on Eurasian, but these differences are not infallible. Vocally, the two are almost identical, but some calls of Daurian seem slightly higher in pitch compared with those of Eurasian Jackdaws in Britain.

Separating the choughs

The two species of chough differ from *Corvus* crows in having a smooth, not scaled, tarsus, very short, dense, nasal feathers and brightly coloured bill and feet. Both inhabit open rocky and grassy habitats, chiefly in mountainous regions, although the Red-billed *P. pyrrhcorax* occurs widely on coastal cliffs in the west of its range. Both species are gregarious and overlap extensively in distribution, at times occurring together on the same mountain slopes, although the Yellow-billed *P. graculus* has a preference for higher elevations than the Red-billed, the latter favouring grassy slopes and plateaux with grazing animals. Both species feed primarily on invertebrates, but the Yellow-billed Chough also freely scavenges about human habitation. Parties of jackdaws will also wheel about cliff faces and distant birds can suggest choughs, but they have different calls, are relatively larger-headed and have a stouter black bill, less buoyant flight and neater, less fingered, wing tip.

The two choughs are similar in size and basic shape, but in flight there are subtle differences which have been discussed by Tucker (1976) and Grant (1987), although the latter pointed out that individuals in primary moult in late summer can be very similar and doubted the proposed differences. My studies of both indicate, however, that differences are usually quite marked, particularly when the birds are directly overhead, although moulting individuals are confusing and identification is then best aided by voice. A very useful paper by Königstedt *et al.* (1990) admirably tackles the subject and confirms these findings, which are discussed below.

Yellow-billed Chough

The small, clear-yellow bill, often appearing whitish, is diagnostic when this crow is close. At longer ranges, however, Yellow-billed can easily be confused with Red-billed Chough, which shares its habitat, red legs and gregarious habits. Many field guides warn that there can be confusion with recently fledged Red-billed Chough, which has a shorter and yellower bill than that of the adult, but the colour is a dull, dingy orange or fleshy-yellow, not the clear bright pale yellow of Yellow-billed, and juveniles are invariably accompanied by the much more distinctive adults.

Yellow-billed, even in silhouette, has a shorter bill and relatively smaller head and longer tail than does Red-billed, the tail projecting well beyond the wing tips when at rest (only equalling the wing tips on Red-billed). The flight shape also differs, but can be difficult to judge accurately unless the birds are directly overhead, but Yellow-billed has a smaller head, less 'square' wings (owing to gradation of primary lengths), a more curving trailing edge to the wing and a more pinched wing base. The five-fingered primaries are less



Fig. 2. Red-billed *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax* (left) and Yellow-billed Choughs *P. graculus* (right) to show differences in flight silhouette. Note more projecting head, relatively shorter, squarer-tipped, tail and more rectangular wing shape, created by straighter trailing edge and longer, more even primary 'fingers', of Red-billed (Hilary Burn)

prominent than those of Red-billed and are of uneven length (forming a rounded, not blunt, outline to the wing tip). The tail of Yellow-billed is relatively longer and more rounded at the tip than that of Red-billed; this can often be roughly gauged when birds are directly overhead by comparing exposed length from wing base to tail tip with width of wing base (longer on Yellow-billed, more or less equal on Red-billed).

Calls are also quite diagnostic, those of Yellow-billed being mostly rather 'uncorvine': a sweet, rippling 'preeep' and a descending thin, whistled 'sweeeoo', both calls varying somewhat in pitch and intensity, the latter recalling a squeaky version of the call of Red-billed Chough. A rolling 'churr', possibly an alarm call, is often given.

Red-billed Chough

The slender, curved red bill is diagnostic. Confusion is likely only with Yellow-billed Chough in mountainous regions where the two species often occur together; but their flight silhouettes and calls also differ. Red-billed has relatively broader and markedly more rectangular wings than Yellow-billed, with six strongly-fingered primaries (the longest three of which are virtually equal and form a squared tip to the wing outline), a straight trailing edge to the secondaries (lacking gentle bulge and pinched base to the trailing edge of Yellow-billed) and a shorter, more square-ended tail (tail length more or less equal to width of the base of the wing, not markedly longer as on Yellow-billed). Red-billed has a more prominently projecting head than Yellow-billed, which is enhanced by its longer bill. At rest, the wing tips equal the tip of the tail, whereas on Yellow-billed the tail distinctly projects beyond the wing tips; this difference can be visible at quite long ranges when birds flirt their wings when calling. Even when the bill colour is not discernible, the slender curved shape is often apparent at reasonable ranges. Distant birds on the ground may often be safely distinguished (at least from jackdaws) by the vigorous digging action as they feed, digging and pulling at surface vegetation and turning over small stones in their search for invertebrates. By comparison, Yellow-billed Choughs feed by picking and digging at the ground in a less strenuous

manner. The flight action is very buoyant, with deep, bounding progression, the birds freely indulging in spectacular aerobatics over cliff faces.

The usual call is a high-pitched, almost hoarse 'chee-aw', uttered both in flight and on the ground. (The bird's name, chough, is onomatopoeic if pronounced 'chow' rather than 'chuff'.) Although this is distinctive, jackdaw vocabulary includes a similar call, but that of Red-billed Chough is clearer, more explosive and higher in pitch. Other calls are basically variants of this call, but more distinct is a harsh, scolding 'ker ker ker', seemingly of alarm.

Summary

This short paper discusses the identification of Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauricus* and reviews the field features of Yellow-billed *Pyrrhonorax graculus* and Red-billed Choughs *P. pyrrhonorax*. Black-phase Daurian Jackdaw is very similar to Eurasian Jackdaw *C. monedula*, but has more extensive deep black on throat and breast, silver streaking on sides of head, dark irides, and acquires whitish areas on upper nape at early stages of transition to pied adult plumage (thus giving reverse of nape pattern of Eurasian Jackdaw, which is often obviously whitish at base of neck). The choughs may be separated in flight by voice, wing shape and head and tail proportions. Yellow-billed has a small head and bill, less strongly fingered and more rounded wing tip, longer and more round-tipped tail and a slightly curved trailing edge to the wing which is pinched at the base. Red-billed has a more projecting head (enhanced by longer bill), shorter and more square-ended tail, distinctly rectangular wings with six (not five of Yellow-billed) prominently fingered primaries and straight trailing edge to the secondaries. These differences are best judged when birds are directly overhead.

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Steve Madge, 2 Church Row, Shevioc, Torpoint, Cornwall PL11 3EH

Fig. 3. Choughs and jackdaws (Hilary Burn)

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax*

1a adult. In flight, note rectangular wings, long-fingered primaries and square-ended tail; tail-length equals width of wing base.

1b juvenile. Shorter and yellower bill than adult; legs reddish.

Yellow-billed Chough *P. graculus*

2a adult. In flight, note wings less rectangular than those of Red-billed, with primaries shorter and less fingered; tail longer than width of wing base and slightly rounded at tip.

2b juvenile. Dingy bill and dusky legs, latter brownish to first summer.

Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

3a adult of race *spermologus* (western Europe).

3b juvenile of race *spermologus*. Nape darker than that of adult; iris dark.

3c adult of race *soemmerringii* (eastern Europe and Asia). Very pale grey nape, often with obvious whitish basal collar.

Daurian Jackdaw *C. dauricus*

4a adult. (Short-lived juvenile plumage stage is similar but duller.)

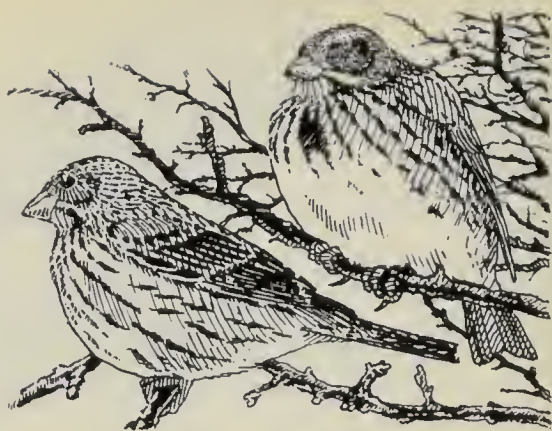
4b immature. Differs from adult Eurasian in having darker grey nape, dark iris, silver streaks on sides of head and deep black of throat extending onto breast. Last two features important as distinctions from juvenile Eurasian. Birds acquiring pale collar are at first very pale on upper nape, remaining dark on lower nape (reverse of Eurasian, which is palest on lower nape).

Fig. 3 is taken from *Crows and Jays* by Steve Madge and Hilary Burn, and its inclusion in colour in *British Birds* has been sponsored by the book's publisher, Christopher Helm Publishers



The decline of the Corn Bunting

Paul F. Donald,
Jeremy D. Wilson
and Michael Shepherd



The Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* is one of a number of open-country species likely to have benefited greatly from landscape changes brought about by agricultural man (Harrison 1988). Cereal cultivation, developed in the 'Fertile Crescent' of the Middle East around 8000 BC, reached Britain around 5000 BC (Edwards & Hirons 1984). Permanent cultivation necessitated the clearance of large tracts of the dense forests which had covered most of central and northern Europe since the retreat of the Weichselian glaciation around 8000 BC. This felling accelerated during the Iron Age so that by the time of the Roman Conquest the woodland cover in parts of southern Britain had been reduced to levels similar to those found today (Rackham 1976). The agricultural landscape thus predates other open-country systems such as heather moorland and, possibly, chalk grassland (Potts 1991), and the creation of treeless areas enabled many open-country species whose ranges were previously centred around the steppe areas of southern Europe and Asia to expand northwards and westwards. The huge increase in the area of arable land following agricultural improvements from the late eighteenth century onwards may have further aided the range expansion of certain species.

The Corn Bunting is confined to the Western Palearctic, largely between 30°N and 60°N and west of 45°E (Harrison 1982). The European population comprises 26-50% of the world population (Tucker 1991). The species inhabits a wide range of dry, open-country habitats at up to 2,600 m, although in central and western Europe it is confined mostly to agricultural land, particularly cereal and grassland areas (Dolman 1992). In parts of northern and western Britain and in Ireland, the present distribution is further confined to coastal areas and land below 200 m. The species is present all year throughout most of its breeding range, but truly migratory populations are found in parts of northeastern Europe (Gliemann 1973; Hegelbach & Ziswiler 1979). The diet consists of weed seeds, grasses, cereal grain, berries and invertebrates, the latter constituting up to 30% of food intake (Witherby *et al.* 1938). Young are fed on invertebrates (particularly insect larvae) and also on unripe grain (Watson 1992a). The unusual breeding biology of Corn Buntings has been intensively studied (e.g. Ryves & Ryves 1934; McGregor 1986; Shepherd 1992).

The British Trust for Ornithology's Common Birds Census (Marchant *et al.* 1990) and the two Atlases of breeding birds in Britain and Ireland (Sharrock 1976; Gibbons *et al.* 1993) have shown that there was a severe decline in

numbers and a contraction in the range of the Corn Bunting in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s. The CBC index (fig. 1) records a decline in numbers which started during the mid 1970s and accelerated after 1980. By 1992, the index stood at less than one-third of that in 1970, although even this might underestimate the decline, owing to the southerly bias in the distribution of CBC plots. During the 1968-72 Atlas fieldwork period, the Corn Bunting was recorded in 1,426 10-km squares in Britain and Ireland (Sharrock 1976), whereas during the 1988-91 period this had fallen to 932 (Gibbons *et al.* 1993), representing a range contraction of around 35% between the two Atlas periods. It is apparent, however, that this decline is not the first to have occurred this century (e.g. Parslow 1973). This paper reviews changes in the status of the Corn Bunting in Britain and Ireland during the twentieth century and relates these changes to trends elsewhere in Europe. Possible reasons for the observed changes are discussed.

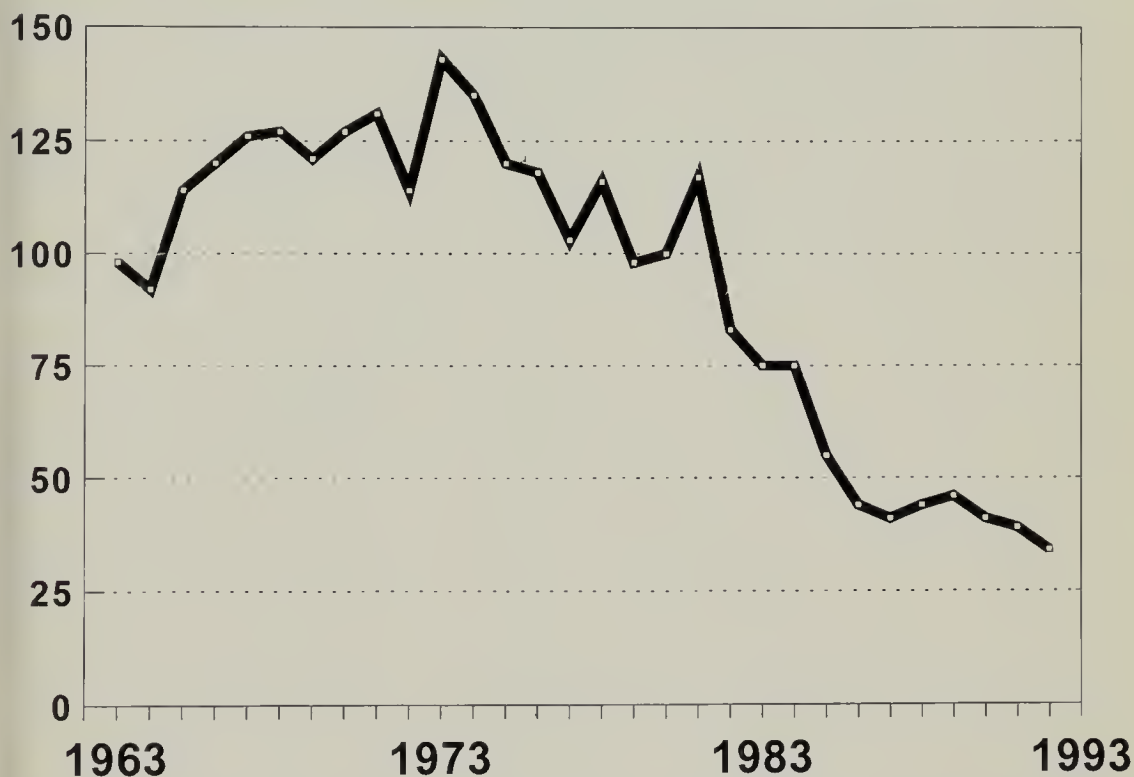


Fig. 1. CBC Index for Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*. The index is given an arbitrary value of 100 in the datum year (1980). Further information on the interpretation of indices is given in Marchant *et al.* (1990)

Regional accounts

County and regional avifaunas, annual bird reports and journals were examined to identify changes in regional distributions and populations of the Corn Bunting throughout this century. In addition, all BTO Regional Representatives and County Bird Recorders were invited to provide details of changes in the status of the Corn Bunting in their areas. Specific locations of breeding sites which were abandoned before the 1968-72 Atlas were mapped (fig. 2). Additional information on distribution was obtained from BTO Nest Record Scheme cards and from collection locations of skins and eggs in the Natural History Museum bird collection in Tring and in Liverpool Museum.



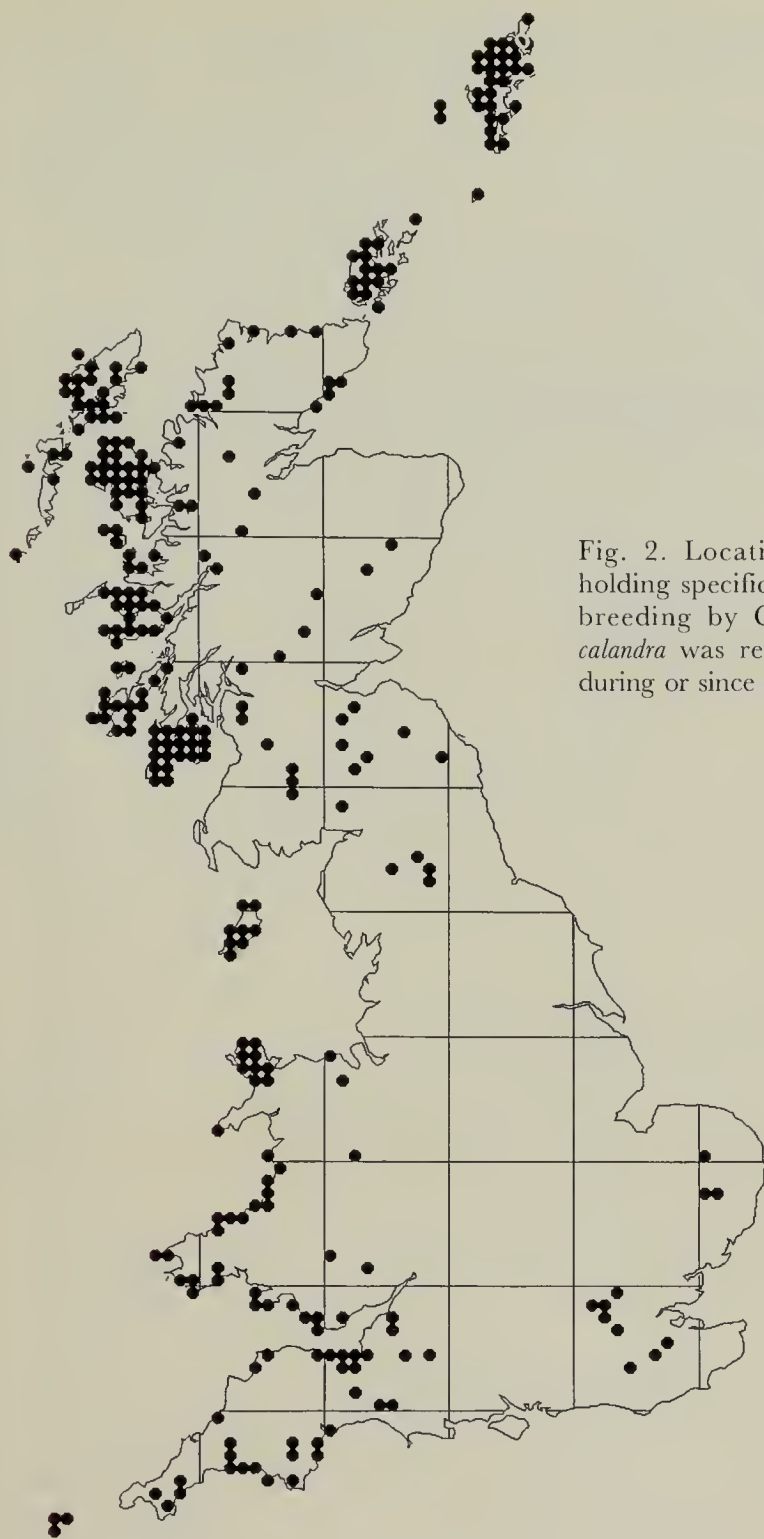


Fig. 2. Location of 10-km squares holding specifically named sites where breeding by Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra* was recorded before but not during or since the 1968-72 Atlas

This information was used to establish the likely range of the Corn Bunting in Britain at the beginning of this century and to chart any changes in distribution and abundance that have occurred since then. The extent of available information differed greatly between regions.

Several European ornithological organisations provided information on changes in the status and distribution of the Corn Bunting in their respective countries. This information was used to identify patterns of population change across Europe and to relate these to those in Britain.

The decline in number of occupied 10-km squares between the two Atlas periods in each of the regions described below is given in table 1.

The following regional accounts use a mixture of old and new county names, which vary according to the age of the literature cited.

Table 1. Number of 10-km squares occupied by Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra* in each Breeding Atlas period and percentage decline in distribution

Regions follow those described in the regional accounts. The number of occupied 10-km squares given in this table is slightly higher than the actual number of occupied squares in each Atlas since a small number of 10-km squares (14) is split between regions used in this account and is therefore included twice

Region	1968-72 Atlas	1988-91 Atlas	% decline
Shetland	7	0	100.0
Orkney	11	5	54.5
Outer Hebrides	29	19	34.5
Inner Hebrides	28	7	75.0
N Scotland	40	14	65.0
E Scotland	111	61	45.0
Central Scotland	79	26	67.0
S Scotland	53	13	75.4
N Wales	4	1	75.0
S Wales	8	1	87.5
Ireland	69	11	84.0
SW England	128	69	46.0
SE England	138	122	11.6
East Anglia	154	143	7.1
E Midlands	164	148	9.7
W Midlands	148	134	9.4
NE England	173	127	26.6
NW England	96	41	57.3

SCOTLAND

During the 1920s, Corn Buntings were recorded breeding in every district of Scotland except for West Stirling, the Isle of May, Fair Isle and St Kilda, and were regarded as 'resident, common around the coasts, local elsewhere' (Baxter & Rintoul 1928). Some 25 years later, however, the species had 'noticeably decreased of late in many parts', but this was not correlated with 'any change in agriculture or territorial associations' (Baxter & Rintoul 1953). The decline has continued throughout Scotland since then (Thom 1986) and the species has become extinct in many areas where it was once abundant. Although there is little doubt that Corn Buntings have decreased in range and numbers everywhere in Scotland during the course of this century, the available evidence suggests that the decline has been more severe in the north and particularly the west. The numbers of regions occupied by Corn Buntings throughout the century are given in fig. 3.



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Fig. 3. Changes in the numbers of counties holding regularly breeding populations of Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra* in Scotland (n = 47) and Ireland (n = 32)

Shetland The Corn Bunting once reached the northern limit of its world range in Shetland. A number of local names ('Docken Sparrow', 'Cornbill') attest to its previous abundance, and at the end of the last century Evans & Buckley (1899) described it as 'resident and decidedly common throughout the islands'. It was common on crofting land on even the smallest and most isolated islands (including Uyea, Out Skerries and Foula). The species was still common in the larger areas of farmland in 1945 (Baxter & Rintoul 1953), but by the mid 1950s the population was much reduced. Although Venables & Venables (1955) found it on ten islands, they quoted the local opinion that numbers had 'decreased within living memory'. By 1964, Corn Buntings had disappeared from Fedlar, Skerries and Bressay (fig. 4) and were scarce in Unst, North Roe and Dunrossness, although still present at three sites on Yell (R. J. Tulloch verbally, per M. G. Pennington). By the time of the 1968-72 Atlas, the Corn Bunting was scarce in Shetland. Extinctions on islands continued and the last confirmed breeding in Shetland was on Mainland in 1978, although there may have been occasional breeding until 1983 (M. G. Pennington *in litt.*). In less than 70 years, the Corn Bunting declined from being one of Shetland's commonest songbirds (D. Okill *in litt.*) to extinction.

Orkney The earliest reference to the Corn Bunting in Orkney describes it as being a very common resident, congregating 'in great numbers' in farmyards during the winter, when many were shot for the table (Low 1813). Around the turn of the century, it was common on all crofting land (Buckley & Harvie-Brown 1891), although less common on North Ronaldsay, where there were 15 singing males in 1892 (Briggs 1893). During the late 1920s the species was still common on Sanday, Stronsay and Westray, but had decreased on Mainland (Baxter & Rintoul 1953). As late as the mid 1940s, Corn Buntings were still common on all cultivated islands (Lack 1943), but during the next 25 years declined rapidly, numbers of singing males falling to single figures on all islands except Sanday (Balfour 1971). Since 1982, breeding has been confined to Sanday and Stronsay, with around ten pairs on each island, although a few have been reported singing elsewhere (Booth *et al.* 1984). The decline of the Corn Bunting in Orkney appears to have started slightly later than that in Shetland, with dates of island extinctions reflecting this (fig. 4). Between 1979 and 1991 there was no apparent decrease in what is now the world's most northerly breeding population of Corn Buntings (C. Booth *in litt.*).



Fig. 4. Approximate year of extinction of the Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* as a regular breeding bird on Scottish islands. Islands still occupied in 1992 are shown in black

Outer Hebrides During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Corn Bunting was one of the most abundant birds on farmland throughout the Outer Hebrides, even reaching as far west as St Kilda, where it was common. The species was still increasing at the end of that century as a result of the conversion of peatlands into farmland (Harvie-Brown & Buckley 1888), and Corn Buntings were probably more abundant on the Outer Hebrides than anywhere else in Scotland (Baxter & Rintoul 1953). Despite its disappearance from St Kilda prior to 1910, Baxter & Rintoul (1953) considered that 'the species continues to be abundant in these islands and it is well distributed in the crofting areas'. Since then, the population has declined throughout, particularly on Harris and Lewis, where there were very few pairs left by 1971 (Cunningham 1990). By the early 1980s, the species had ceased breeding on Harris and was reduced to a handful of individuals on Lewis, where it may already have become extinct as a breeding bird (Cunningham 1990 & *in litt.*). On the Uists and Benbecula, the species is still relatively common in certain areas, although even there the population has declined. In 1988, there were around 100 singing males on North Uist (M. Shepherd, pers. obs.) compared with an estimate of 117-149 in 1983 (Williams *et al.* 1986). Between 1988 and 1991, the population declined by a further 30% (M. Shepherd, pers. obs.).

Inner Hebrides and Southwest Coast (Argyll & Bute, Kintyre, Ayrshire) One of the most dramatic losses of Corn Buntings in Britain has taken place on the Inner Hebrides and the southwest coast of Scotland. The extraordinary abundance of the species on some islands in the Inner Hebrides was noted by several authors. On Iona and Mull 'all the stackyards and stubble fields abound with the corn bunting in winter and in summer his . . . song is heard from every stone dyke and thatch roof shieling' (Graham 1890). The species was 'abundant on Figg as in most of the islands' (Harvie-Brown & Buckley 1892). Numbers began to decline, however, soon after these accounts were written, with the first of the many island extinctions (fig. 4) occurring during the early 1930s. Corn Buntings became extinct as regular breeding birds on Arran around 1930 and, despite subsequent irregular breeding, were not recorded during the 1988-91 Atlas. The species now survives on the Inner Hebrides only on Tiree, where there was a sharp decline in numbers between 1979 and 1983 (Cadbury 1989).

During the mid nineteenth century, Corn Buntings were 'nowhere more plentiful than Argyllshire, Ayrshire and Wigtownshire' (Gray 1871). Some 20 years later, the situation may have altered, since Corn Buntings were 'generally less abundant [on the mainland] than in the Isles' (Harvie-Brown & Buckley 1892). A substantial decline in the large numbers reported in Ayrshire at the beginning of the century was already apparent by 1929 (Patton & Pike 1929), with the species confined mainly to the coast, whilst farther south, in Wigtown and Kirkcudbright, it had become scarce and local by 1935 (Baxter & Rintoul 1953). In Argyll, the species bred throughout Kintyre during the first half of this century (Gibson & Colville 1975), with a few persisting until the 1950s (B. Zonfrillo *in litt.*). By the time of the 1968-72 Atlas, Corn Buntings had disappeared from Argyll and Bute, but were still present in Ayrshire, where they extended up to 40 km inland. This latter population has since declined, however, and the species is probably lost as a regular breeder in Ayrshire. By the time of the 1988-91 Atlas, breeding was recorded in western Scotland only on the Uists and Tiree, at a few scattered sites in Dumfries & Galloway and in a single 10-km square in Ayr. The extent of the species' former range on the Inner Hebrides and the south-west coast of Scotland is apparent from fig. 2.

Northern Scotland (Highland Region excluding Skye) A description of the Corn Bunting as a 'numerous resident' in the northwest Highlands and Skye around the turn of the century (Harvie-Brown & Macpherson 1904) is the only available information on the status of the species on the northwest coast of Scotland before the 1950s. In 1848, the species was found in Sutherland, where it 'haunts the cornfields . . . never far from cultivation' (St John 1891). Although Corn Buntings occurred all along the northwest and north coasts of Scotland, they were local and confined to the coastal agricultural fringe. The species was also restricted in northeast Scotland to the east coasts of Caithness, Sutherland and Ross & Cromarty, where it was often abundant (Harvie-Brown & Buckley 1887). Population trends in these remote areas are not well recorded, although in western parts the species had become scarce by 1936 (Baxter & Rintoul 1953) and was recorded from few areas during fieldwork for the 1968-72 Atlas. An account of the extinction of a small local population in southeast Sutherland is given by McDonald (1985). In north and west Sutherland, Corn Buntings had probably disappeared by 1961 (Angus 1983) and the species is now probably extinct as a breeding bird throughout Caithness and Sutherland. Farther south, the few breeding in western Ross & Cromarty during the 1968-72 Atlas had disappeared by the time of the 1988-91 Atlas. In Badenoch & Strathspey, the species probably bred in small numbers earlier this century, but had disappeared before 1960, whilst in Inverness-shire a few survive in the east of the county, where declines accelerated during the 1970s (R. H. Dennis *in litt.*). Corn Buntings were relatively common on the Black Isle and in the Easter Ross lowlands until the mid 1970s, since when they have disappeared from the Black Isle and are now rare throughout Easter Ross (R. H. Dennis *in litt.*). In Lochaber, the species was described as 'very scarce' in 1936 (Baxter & Rintoul 1953) and had disappeared by the time of the 1968-72 Atlas. One of the few detailed accounts of population declines in northeast Scotland since the 1940s indicated the localised effects of the decline of the species, with some local populations showing few signs of decline and others disappearing completely (Watson 1992b).

Eastern Scotland (Grampian & Tayside) Despite being considered to be more local in eastern Scotland than in the west in the last century, eastern populations fared better than those in western districts. Sim (1903) described the Corn Bunting in Aberdeenshire as 'one of our most plentiful birds' to be seen 'in all cultivated traets'. In 1936, Corn Buntings were still common throughout the county (Baxter & Rintoul 1953) and extended farther inland there than anywhere else in Scotland. In the 1950s, the species was 'abundant' in many coastal districts, although confined inland to sites below 400 feet (120 m) (Goodbody 1955). The Buchan Plain remains the Scottish stronghold of the Corn Bunting despite the slight reduction in range noted between the two Atlas periods. Population densities remain fairly high across the Buchan Plain and the lower Deveron Valley, but decreased during the 1980s at some inland sites and south of Aberdeen. The species has declined generally since the 1968-72 Atlas (Buckland *et al.* 1990), although in Moray the population appears to have stabilised, with some local increases during the late 1980s (Cook 1992). In parts of Tayside, Corn Buntings may have been in decline as early as 1906 (Harvie-Brown 1906), when the species was 'rarer than formerly in many parts', although Boase (1955) did not include the Corn Bunting in his list of species which had declined since 1900. Atlas data show that the Corn Bunting's distribution contracted between 1968 and 1988, although the

species survives in reduced numbers along the coast of Angus. Farther inland, the species is on the verge of extinction in Perth and Kinross, where it was locally common until the mid 1970s (W. A. Mattingley *in litt.*).

Central Scotland (Central, Fife, Lothian and inland areas of Strathclyde) Corn Buntings were always scarce or local in Central Region and inland areas of Strathclyde. In the 1840s, the *New Statistical Account* for Alloa placed the Corn Bunting in a list of 'the more uncommon birds', whilst farther west the species was already declining rapidly around Callander during the 1870s (Rintoul & Baxter 1935). In southeast Central Region, Corn Buntings bred 'sparingly' in the 1930s. Since then, the range has contracted (C. J. Henty *in litt.*) and the species was recorded during the 1988-91 Atlas in just one 10-km square. It is on the verge of extinction in Central Region. There is less information on changes in the status of the Corn Bunting in inland areas of Strathclyde, although Baxter & Rintoul (1953) quoted a report that Corn Buntings had declined owing to the spread of the city of Glasgow in areas in which they had bred regularly. The 1968-72 Atlas showed the species to be well distributed throughout the old counties of Renfrewshire, Dumbarton, Stirling and Lanarkshire. A rapid range contraction followed, however, and none was recorded during the 1988-91 Atlas. This represents perhaps the most widespread decline in the distribution of Corn Buntings in any region of Britain between the two Atlas periods.

In Fife, the species was found locally in small numbers along the coast during the early 1930s (Rintoul & Baxter 1935). The 1968-72 Atlas recorded it in every 10-km square in the county, but since then there has been a decline in distribution, linked with a decline in numbers which probably started in the 1950s (Smout 1986). This has particularly affected western areas, which are now almost deserted. Eastern Fife still holds around 100 singing males and in this region the distribution does not appear to have contracted in recent years (Smout 1991).

Changes in the Corn Bunting population of Lothian have been particularly well documented. In the mid nineteenth century, the species was local in East Lothian, and remained so in the 1930s (Nash 1935; Rintoul & Baxter 1935), although it was apparently more widely distributed in coastal areas. It is unclear when Corn Buntings started to decline in Lothian, although counts of winter roosts made during the early 1970s were considerably lower than those in the 1950s (Brown *et al.* 1984). The decline in range and numbers was apparent even during the five years of fieldwork for the 1968-72 Atlas. A full breeding survey of Corn Buntings throughout Lothian in 1982 showed a decline from 25 occupied 10-km squares in the 1968-72 Atlas to ten in 1982 (Brown *et al.* 1984). This subsequently fell to six in the 1988-91 Atlas. The species was absent from many areas of apparently suitable habitat during the 1982 survey and one of the three population centres identified in that survey has since disappeared (P. R. Gordon *in litt.*; *Lothian Bird Reports* 1979-90). Corn Buntings are now on the verge of extinction as regular breeders in Lothian (C. McGuigan *in litt.*).

Southern Scotland (Dumfries & Galloway, Borders) In the western parts of Dumfries & Galloway (the old county of Wigtown), Corn Buntings were abundant during the late nineteenth century (Gray 1871), as they were along the southwest coast of Scotland (see above). In eastern areas of Dumfries & Galloway, the species was common along the coast during the late nineteenth century, but was rather more local inland, where its distribution followed the valleys of the Cairn, Nith and Annan. In 1901, the species was described as 'common' in the inland parish of Glencairn (Martin 1901), although ten years later Corrie (1910) described it as 'local', indicating some decline during the intervening years. Gladstone (1910) considered that the distribution of the Corn Bunting in Dumfries & Galloway had not changed over the preceding 80 years, but in 1922 suggested that it had increased in coastal areas, and documented the colonisation of a previously unoccupied inland area (Hunter 1921; Gladstone 1922). This population established itself around 1901 and increased to over 20 singing males. Its fate is unfortunately not recorded, though the area was abandoned sometime before 1968. Despite being described as 'scarce and local' in Kirkeudbright and Wigtown in 1935 (Baxter & Rintoul 1953), declines before the early 1960s were confined primarily to inland areas. The species started to decline in Nithsdale during the late 1930s and may have disappeared from the upper reaches of the river valley by the early 1960s (*North Solway Bird Report*, no. 3, 1967-68). In the Annan Valley, the species was still present during the 1968-72 Atlas, but had disappeared by the time of the second, with local records suggesting declines during the late 1970s (R. Mearns *in litt.*). The coastal lowland population declined

almost to extinction between the two Atlases, although the decline may have started during the early 1960s, or perhaps earlier in the west of the county (P. N. Collin *in litt.*). The species is now restricted to two coastal areas either side of the Nith (R. Meams *in litt.*) and to a few scattered sites in Wigtown and Kirkcudbright, where populations appear stable (P. N. Collin *in litt.*).

During the first decade of the present century, Corn Buntings were 'fairly abundant, though somewhat local' throughout Borders, where they apparently favoured 'barren spots covered with rough grass' and fallow, rather than the more usual arable areas frequented elsewhere (Evans 1911). Although found throughout the region except in the extreme west, the species was more common in the east, and inland populations may have started to decline as early as the 1860s. The 1968-72 Atlas showed the species to be distributed along the coast and at a number of inland sites. A severe decline during the next 20 years resulted in virtual extinction, and the Corn Bunting is now found regularly only in three small areas of the Berwickshire coast, the total population numbering fewer than 15 singing males (R. Murray *in litt.*).

WALES

Although less well documented, the population decline in Wales has been as dramatic as that in Scotland and again appears to have started or accelerated during the 1930s, with a number of county extinctions during that decade.

North Wales (Gwynedd, Clwyd, northern areas of Powys) Around the turn of the century, Corn Buntings were common or abundant breeding birds in North Wales, with a pronounced preference for coastal areas. This was so marked that 'if a line were drawn all round the coast at a distance of one mile inland, the narrow strip of country between this line and the sea would be found to contain about 90 per cent of all the Corn Buntings in North Wales' (Forrest 1907). The same author believed that the bird was twice as common on the west coast as on the north, with particularly high numbers on Anglesey. Farther away from the coast, records were scarce (as suggested by fig. 2), but the species was recorded as far inland as Welshpool. In Merioneth, Corn Buntings were common in the coastal belt in 1919, but just ten years later were known from only a single site and became extinct as breeding birds in the county some time before 1935 (Hope Jones 1974), since when there have been only occasional records (R. Thorpe *in litt.*). On Anglesey, Corn Buntings were still common in the early 1900s, but had declined markedly by 1928 (Whitaker 1948). On the adjacent mainland, the species disappeared from Caernarvonshire some time between 1920 and 1950 (Hope Jones & Dare 1976) and by 1956 the species was 'an uncommon summer visitor . . . no records recently of breeding' throughout Gwynedd (Cambrian Ornithological Society records). On Bardsey, Corn Buntings declined from being one of the most abundant songbirds in the early years of the century (Aplin 1910) to a single pair in 1930 (Wilson 1930). Subsequent records on the west coast, including one during the 1968-72 Atlas, relate only to wandering individuals (J. Barnes *in litt.*). On the north coast, the species had disappeared by the time of the 1968-72 Atlas from all areas except Flint, where it was 'very localised but fairly common where present' (Birch *et al.* 1968). A breeding record from Flint in the 1988-91 Atlas was the only one in Wales.

South Wales (Dyfed, Glamorgan, Gwent, southern areas of Powys) As in the north, the Corn Bunting's distribution at the turn of the century was concentrated along the coast. Inland, the species was 'uncommon throughout the county' of Breconshire (Cambridge Phillips 1899). Since then, there have been only occasional records and the species probably ceased breeding around the turn of the century (Massey 1976). There is only one authenticated record of the Corn Bunting from Radnor (Peers 1985) and the species has always been rare in Gwent, with breeding recorded only in 1903 and 1970 (Ingram & Morrey Salmon 1937; Ferns *et al.* 1977). It was found in most coastal areas of Glamorgan around the turn of the century, although far less commonly than in more western areas of Wales. The species vanished from most coastal areas of Glamorgan during the late 1920s and the 1930s (Heathcote *et al.* 1967), perhaps surviving on the Gower Peninsula until the early 1950s (Grenfell & Thomas 1982). Since then, the Corn Bunting has been a rare visitor to the county (P. Bristow & R. J. Howells *in litt.*). In Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire the species was locally common in coastal districts around the turn of the century, extending up to ten miles (16 km) inland in some places. In Cardigan, it was in decline before 1925 and disappeared as a breeding bird during the late 1930s (Ingram *et al.* 1966), since when it

has been recorded on just six occasions (P. Davies *in litt.*). In Carmarthen, it probably disappeared at about the same time (Ingram & Morrey Salmon 1954). Pembrokeshire was the only county in South Wales to retain a regularly breeding Corn Bunting population after the decline of the 1930s. The species was locally abundant in the county around the turn of the century (Mathew 1894) and maintained local populations on the westernmost peninsulas (Lockley 1949). These decreased during the 1950s, with one small population surviving until 1963. There have been no records of breeding since, despite recent reports of males holding territory (G. Rees *in litt.*).

IRELAND

Although poorly documented, the decline of the Corn Bunting in Ireland appears to have been even more severe than that in Wales or Scotland. In 1900, the species was common in all coastal areas, although usually scarce or local farther inland (Ussher & Warren 1900). Breeding was recorded in every county except Leitrim and possibly Fermanagh. The species may have started to decline in some areas as early as the end of the last century, and by the 1930s was scarce or absent in coastal Cork (Kennedy *et al.* 1954). In 1925 it was still common in Limerick, but had disappeared by the early 1950s.

By the beginning of the 1950s, the species had virtually disappeared from inland Ireland and was much reduced in numbers along most of the coastline, where it was confined to a number of headlands, particularly along the west coast (Kennedy *et al.* 1954). In Mayo and Galway, however, it was still common in 1945 and numbers there were apparently stable. There was even the suggestion of a recovery in Dublin during the 1950s (Hutchinson 1989). By the early 1960s, however, even the stronghold populations were much reduced (Rutledge 1966) and by the time of the 1968-72 Atlas breeding records were confined to Waterford, Wexford, Mayo, Donegal and Northern Ireland, with scattered records in Cork and Kerry. The decline continued over the next 20 years, and during the 1988-91 Atlas the species was recorded from just a handful of sites in Mayo and Galway. Elsewhere in Ireland, the species is a vagrant or rare visitor to a number of coastal sites (Hutchinson 1989; G. Gordon and D. Knight *in litt.*).

The early distribution and pattern of decline of the Corn Bunting in Ireland correspond well with those in western Scotland and Wales. The predominantly coastal breeding population may have declined slightly before the 1920s, but the decline accelerated during the late 1920s and early 1930s, leading to the extinction of the species in many counties (fig. 3). Although poorly documented, the situation appears to have stabilised during the 1950s and 1960s, with a further decline between the two breeding Atlas periods. The species is now on the verge of extinction as a breeding bird in Ireland.

ENGLAND

In England, Corn Buntings have always been more widespread than in Scotland, Wales or Ireland, with less of a coastal bias in distribution in most areas. Despite this, it was recognised by many early authors that the frequently used name 'Common Bunting' was a misnomer, since, although often abundant, the species had a patchy distribution and was less common in most areas than the Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*. Declines in population began around the same time as those noted elsewhere in Britain and, as in Scotland, affected mainly western and northern populations.

Southwest England (Wiltshire, Avon, Somerset, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall and Scilly)

Nineteenth-century avifaunas show that Corn Buntings were common in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and were fairly widespread (e.g. Rodd 1880). During the late eighteenth century, the species was so common in Scilly that it was considered a pest and attracted a bounty (Penhallurick 1978). It was 'not uncommon' on the islands in the early 1920s, but it appears to have declined to extinction as a breeding bird by 1939, with only a few subsequent records of individual birds (W. Wagstaff *in litt.*). In Cornwall, numbers appear to have been highest in the west, particularly along the coast (Rodd 1870, in Penhallurick 1978). Although difficult to date precisely, a population decline appears to have started around the turn of the century, although at one well-studied site the decrease became most apparent between the mid 1930s and the early 1940s (Ryves, in Penhallurick 1978). No clear trends in population levels emerge for the period between the 1950s and the time of the 1968-72 Atlas, when the distribution was centred along the north coast in the west of the county. The population may have increased during the late 1970s, but then collapsed during the early 1980s. The population on the Lizard did not recover, and had disappeared by the time of the 1988-91 Atlas, whilst the north-coast population had declined to around 50 singing males by 1991 (*Cornwall Bird Reports*). The present distribution is concentrated along the short stretch of coast between Newquay and Padstow. The decline in numbers shows no sign of abating, and the Corn Bunting may disappear as a breeding bird in Cornwall in the near future.

In Devon, Corn Buntings have never been common and were described at the end of the last century as 'local, . . . principally along coasts . . . nowhere numerous' (D'Urban & Mathew 1895), with evidence from named locations supporting this (fig. 2). This small population was recorded less frequently after the 1940s, suggesting that a decline took place during this or the previous decade (Price, in Sitters 1988). The Corn Bunting had become extinct as a regular breeding bird in Devon by the 1960s (Moore 1969), although there have been occasional breeding records along the south coast since (Price, in Sitters 1988).

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Corn Bunting was a 'common resident' in Dorset (Mansel-Pleydell 1888). There is no evidence that its status changed significantly throughout the first half of the present century, when Blathwayt (1933, 1940) described the species as breeding 'numerously, especially in coastal districts'. In the 1960s, central areas of the county were being colonised, and during the early 1970s the species was 'local but not uncommon' (Boys 1972), with the main centres of population in the east of the county and along the coast. The 1968-72 Atlas showed the species to be distributed throughout the county, but by the time of the 1988-91 Atlas the formerly well-populated eastern areas were deserted. Evidence from Portland Bird Observatory suggests that a population crash occurred during the 1980s, and numbers in the county as a whole during the early 1990s are much below those of the 1970s.

In Somerset and Avon, Corn Buntings were common during the latter half of the nineteenth century (Smith 1869). By the early 1950s, they had become local in Somerset, 'not common except in restricted localities' (Lewis 1953), and a large number of sites had been abandoned. The once-large breeding population of King's Sedgemoor had already declined significantly by 1934. By the late 1960s, the species was scarce (Palmer & Ballance 1968) and was recorded in Somerset in only a few widely scattered localities during the 1968-72 Atlas. The decline continued during the 1970s and 1980s and the species now breeds regularly at only a single site in Somerset (B. Rabbitts *in litt.*). A number of small populations became established during the early 1980s, but soon disappeared (*Somerset Ornithological Society Reports*). In Avon, around 200 singing males were recorded during the 1968-72 Atlas, falling to around 100 by 1975 and 70 in 1980, by which time the population in the Mendips had disappeared (R. L. Bland *in litt.*). Numbers continued to fall throughout the 1980s, the species now being confined to a small area in the east of the county. During the 1970s and 1980s, the number of occupied tetrads fell from around 40 to six (R. L. Bland *in litt.*).

The open downlands and plains of Wiltshire attracted enormous numbers of Corn Buntings during the nineteenth century, when the species was 'extremely common, especially in the vast tracts of arable land on the Downs' (Smith 1887). Little information is available on population trends during the first half of the twentieth century, but the species was still widely distributed and in places still common by the time of the 1968-72 Atlas. During the late 1970s, there were indications that Corn Buntings were actually increasing in parts of the county (Buxton 1981), but by the time of the 1988-91 Atlas they had disappeared from a number of sites, particularly in the west of the county. The species remains, however, reasonably common in many parts of the Downs and on Salisbury Plain.

Southeast England (Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Sussex, Kent, London, Berkshire, Surrey) In contrast to the declines in numbers and distribution of the Corn Bunting occurring throughout the rest of Britain during the late 1930s, the range in Kent actually expanded during this period (Harrison 1953), although it was still largely confined to eastern and coastal parts of the county. In western parts of Kent, inland breeding may have been more common during the first decades of the present century (Ticehurst 1909; Harrison 1942), but the Weald has apparently never held more than a few, and the Downs are sparsely populated (Taylor *et al.* 1984). Since the mid 1980s, there has been a sharp decline in numbers in some areas (I. Hodgson *in litt.*), although the 1988-91 Atlas shows a distribution little changed from that recorded during the first.

In Sussex, Corn Buntings declined greatly during the early 1930s, but were still locally common during the latter half of that decade (Walpole-Bond 1938). Populations apparently fluctuated, with peaks noted in 1911 and 1927. The distribution was almost entirely restricted to the Downs and farmland to the south, and the species was absent from the central and northern parts of the county, as it had been at the end of the previous century (Borrer 1891). Between 1946 and 1976, the species began to appear at many inland sites and in previously unoccupied parts of the Downs in the west of the county (des Forges & Harber 1963; Shrubb 1979). Since the early 1980s, the population has again declined, although the 1988-91 Atlas shows that little change in distribution occurred during the 1970s and 1980s.

The Corn Bunting was a 'fairly plentiful species in all suitable localities' in Hampshire during the early years of this century (Kelsall & Munn 1905). It was declining by 1920, and by the 1968-72 Atlas had declined in many northern parts of the county (Cohen & Taverner 1972). The 1988-91 Atlas shows that the species has declined further from inland and western parts of the county. On the Isle of Wight, Corn Buntings were decreasing as early as 1909 (Morey 1909) and disappeared during the early 1920s, one of the earliest island extinctions recorded in Britain. During the late 1950s, however, the species reappeared as a breeding bird (Cheverton 1989), with a stable population of between 12 and 20 pairs since (D. Wooldridge *in litt.*).

The Corn Bunting was described at the turn of the century as 'tolerably plentiful on the commons and high fallows' of Surrey, although 'not very abundant' in the county as a whole (Bucknill 1900). By the 1930s, it had become scarce or rare in several parts of the county, particularly the northeast, and had apparently undergone a significant decline. A recovery took place during the 1950s and 1960s, when populations known since the 1940s appear to have increased (Parr 1972; J. J. Wheatley *in litt.*). A further decline set in during the 1980s, and Corn Buntings are now rare and irregular breeders in Surrey (J. J. Wheatley *in litt.*). Similar trends in population appear to have occurred in the London area, with a poorly documented decline starting before 1940, followed by a general recovery during the 1950s. Although the species withdrew from several previously occupied areas to the southwest of London during the 1970s and 1980s, there was at the same time an expansion in range to the east of the city (Atlas data).

In Berkshire, the Corn Bunting was a common resident in the mid nineteenth century (Clark-Kennedy 1868). This status was again applied to the species during the mid 1960s, although its local distribution was stressed (Radford 1966), and no apparent changes in the Corn Bunting population of Berkshire have occurred since. During both Atlas periods, the species was recorded from every 10-km square in the county.

East Anglia and adjacent counties (Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire) The present distribution of Corn Buntings in Norfolk and Suffolk is intriguing, since the species is absent from many inland areas despite being common in Cambridgeshire and inland areas of Essex. Early accounts suggest that the distribution in Norfolk and Suffolk was not always predominantly coastal, and during the late nineteenth century the species was 'pretty generally distributed though not particularly abundant' (Stevenson 1866), although only one reference to the species' presence in the centre of Norfolk is known, describing it as 'common' (Earl of Kimberley 1875). By 1930, the distribution was withdrawing towards the coasts and the Fens, where the species was found in larger numbers (Riviere 1930), and by the mid 1960s it was virtually confined to coastal areas, although still widespread in the Fens on the western fringes of the county (Seago 1977). The coastal populations declined further during the late 1970s (Kelly 1986). There is no indication of the recovery noted elsewhere in southeastern Britain during the 1960s. There was little distributional change in Norfolk between the two Atlas periods.

The same temporal patterns of distributional change took place in Suffolk. During the late nineteenth century, the species was 'common throughout the county' (Babington 1884), but by the early 1930s it had withdrawn from many central areas and was declining elsewhere (Ticehurst 1932). This decline slowed during the 1930s and was followed by a recovery in coastal areas during the early 1950s, although many apparently suitable areas remained unoccupied (Payn 1962). Atlas data show that, whilst the coastal population declined in range during the 1970s and 1980s, there was an expansion into some central areas of the county.

In Essex, Corn Buntings appear to have increased in numbers since the turn of the century, despite some recent declines. The species was uncommon and declining during the late nineteenth century (Christy 1890), and in the late 1920s was restricted to coastal areas and still declining (Glegg 1929). From the 1940s, however, its range began to expand inland, and, except for a slight drop in numbers during the early 1960s, the increase continued until the late 1960s (Hudson & Pyman 1968; Cox 1984). Although the species is absent from much of the north of the county, some large populations occur in southern and eastern areas. Some of these, however, appear to have declined sharply in recent years, and the Essex population now seems to be in decline once more (M. Dennis *in litt.*).

At the turn of the century, Corn Buntings were 'abundant' throughout Cambridgeshire (Evans 1904), although 30 years later the local distribution of the species was stressed (Lack 1934). No apparent changes in status have been recorded since, and the species remains common in many parts of the county, particularly the Fens (Bircham 1989). Both Atlases show the species to be widespread throughout the county.

The changing distribution of Corn Buntings has been particularly well studied in recent years in Hertfordshire. Although apparently common during the 1950s, the species was scarce in large areas of central and eastern Hertfordshire and had apparently always been so (Sage 1959). An expansion into these areas began during the early 1950s, populations in the county increased throughout the 1960s and the early 1970s (Gladwin & Sage 1986), and the species became common in central areas where it had once been scarce (Gladwin 1983). Although the population remained stable during the late 1970s, when the national population was in steep decline (Mead & Smith 1982), by the mid 1980s its distribution was also contracting (Terry 1986). Numbers have continued to fall, particularly in the more recently occupied areas. The species was reported from 301 tetrads during 1967-73, but from only 208 during 1988-92 (Smith *et al.* 1993).

There is no evidence for any change in status of the Corn Bunting in Bedfordshire, where accounts from the turn of the century (Steele-Elliott 1904) and the present day (Trodd & Kramer 1991) refer to the species as being locally common throughout the county. There was no significant change in numbers or distribution between the two Atlas periods and there is evidence of recent expansions in range in some parts of the county (D. Ball and E. Newman *in litt.*). The species was reported from 453 tetrads during 1968-77 and 514 tetrads during 1988-92, but coverage was estimated to have improved by 23% during the second period, so the figures may in fact represent a small decrease in range (R. Dazley, B. Nightingale and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock *in litt.*).

East Midlands and adjacent counties (Buckinghamshire, Leicestershire & Rutland, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire) The Corn Bunting has always been a local, often uncommon breeding bird in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, although more common in Rutland. Around the turn of the century, the Corn Bunting in Northamptonshire was 'not a very abundant species . . . a few pairs breed' (Lord Lilford 1895). A full survey of Corn Buntings was carried out in Northamptonshire during 1944-50 (Burton *c.* 1950), revealing around 265 singing males, 102 of which were concentrated in three small areas south of Kettering. In common with many other areas of southern Britain, the Corn Bunting population in Northamptonshire was apparently increasing at that time. Since then, however, the population has declined considerably, although large flocks still appear at roost sites in winter (R. W. Bullock *in litt.*). In Leicestershire and Rutland, the species was described in 1889 as 'common but sparingly distributed—more often seen in winter' (Browne 1889) and was common in Rutland during the first decade of the present century (Haines 1907). Since then, it has declined and is now uncommon (Hickling 1978), with the current population estimated at between 100 and 1,000 singing males in Leicestershire (R. E. Davis *in litt.*). A recent breeding survey in Rutland found only 30 singing males (Mitcham 1992).

In Nottinghamshire, the species was described as 'fairly common in all cultivated parts' around the turn of the century (Whitaker 1907) and remained so into the 1970s (Dobbs 1975).

Although detailed information on the past status of the Corn Bunting in Lincolnshire is lacking, it is clear that there was a severe decline in the numbers and range of the species during the 1980s (G. P. Catley and P. N. Watts *in litt.*). Despite this, parts of Lincolnshire still hold higher breeding densities than almost anywhere else in Britain (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

In Buckinghamshire, Corn Buntings were local and 'nowhere numerous' during the early years of this century (Hartert & Jourdain 1920). Despite some local reductions in numbers, the status of this species has apparently changed little since then, with the majority concentrated in the Vale of Aylesbury (Lack *et al.* 1993). The breeding population of the county is estimated at 200-700 pairs.

West Midlands (Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire) and adjacent counties (Cheshire, Derbyshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire) Changes in the status of the Corn Bunting in the West Midlands have been well documented (e.g. Harrison *et al.* 1982) and, together with Shropshire and Herefordshire, differ from those found in any other region of Britain and Ireland in the extent of the population recovery and range expansion since 1950. The species was common and widespread in many parts of the West Midlands during the latter half of the nineteenth century (Tomes 1901). Numbers started to decline around the beginning of the century, however, and even as early as 1903 the species was noticeably less common than formerly (Hudson 1903 in Harrison *et al.* 1982). Corn Buntings were 'not common' in Staffordshire during the 1920s (Smith 1933) and by the 1940s the species had almost disappeared from Worcestershire (Harthan 1946) and was very rare in Warwickshire (Norris 1947). A survey in 1946-50 showed that Corn Buntings bred regularly in the West Midlands only in a small district in south Warwickshire (Norris 1951). Since then, however, Corn Buntings have returned to many areas previously abandoned. The recovery became apparent in Warwickshire from the late 1940s and in Worcestershire from the late 1950s (*West Midlands Bird Reports*). The increase in these two counties spread into Staffordshire during the early 1960s and between 1966 and 1968 the species was recorded breeding in 27 10-km squares in the three counties (Lord & Munns 1970). Breeding was recorded in an additional 19 10-km squares during the 1968-72 Atlas, representing a very rapid range expansion in the region during the late 1960s and early 1970s. A further spread in Staffordshire is apparent from the 1988-91 Atlas, although in other parts of the West Midlands the population has apparently stabilised and may now be declining. The considerable increase in range and numbers since the late 1940s has been attributed to conversion of large areas of fallow and grazing land to cereal production (Harrison *et al.* 1982).

In Shropshire and Herefordshire, population trends over the last century have been similar to those in the West Midlands. The species was 'far from common' in Shropshire around the turn of the century (Forrest 1899) and had virtually disappeared by 1940, when fewer than 20 pairs bred in the county (F. Gribble *in litt.*). The increase in numbers and range which started around 1950 has, however, led to a rise in the population to 400-900 singing males (C. Wright *in litt.*). A considerable expansion in the breeding range of the Corn Bunting occurred between the two Atlases, when the number of occupied 10-km squares in the county rose from 12 to 22. Shropshire is, therefore, one of the few counties in Britain in which the national decline in numbers and range has not been apparent (Deans *et al.* 1992; C. Wright *in litt.*). In Herefordshire, there were only two twentieth-century records of breeding until the early 1970s, since when a number of local populations have appeared (Mountford 1975).

Despite the paucity of information, it appears that Corn Buntings have never been widespread in Cheshire, being absent from the eastern hill pastures and from the southern dairy plain (Coward & Oldham 1900). The species' strongholds in the county during the early 1900s lay in the north and west of the county (Coward 1910). The national increase during the 1950s was apparent in Cheshire from the establishment of new local populations and, although by 1962 there may have been a temporary reversal in this trend, with some formerly occupied areas being abandoned (Bell 1962), considerable increases in population and range were apparent throughout the county during the late 1960s (*Cheshire Bird Reports*). Since then, numbers have declined and the species now breeds at low densities throughout its range, the current population being estimated at fewer than 450 singing males (Guest *et al.* 1992).

The population decline of the 1930s was particularly apparent in Derbyshire, where the species was common in many parts of the county during the late nineteenth century (Whitlock 1893). By 1934, the species had become very local, and three years later had abandoned many parts of its former range (Frost 1978). Numbers elsewhere continued to fall during the 1940s. From the 1950s

until the late 1970s, the species underwent a number of local expansions and contractions in its range, disappearing from some areas, but increasing in others (Frost 1978). Since the late 1970s, however, the species has declined throughout the county and is now uncommon and local.

The Corn Bunting has been well studied in Oxfordshire. Around the turn of the century, it was 'a common resident, breeding usually on the high-lying arable lands' (Aplin 1889). A survey in 1928 noted a correlation between the distribution of the Corn Bunting and the distribution of gravels and oolite in the county (Campbell 1959). Particularly high numbers of Corn Buntings were recorded during a survey the following year (*Report of the Oxford Ornithological Society 1930*). No major population decline appears to have taken place during the 1930s, when the species was in decline throughout most of Britain. A survey of breeding Corn Buntings in 1957 revealed around 400 territories in approximately 1,200 km² (Campbell 1959). Parts of the 1957 survey area were resurveyed in 1985 (Banbury Ornithological Society 1985) and numbers found to be little changed. A more extensive survey in 1992 (Oxford Ornithological Society) suggested that, while numbers changed little since 1957, there was a considerable shift in distribution towards the north of the county (J. Brucker and C. Ross *in litt.*). The available evidence suggests that Oxfordshire largely escaped the declines of the 1930s and the 1980s.

Early accounts suggest that Corn Buntings were locally common breeding birds in Gloucestershire during the nineteenth century, particularly in the Cotswolds (Bowly 1859; McIllesh 1902). An increase in the number of reported breeding localities during the 1950s might represent a real increase, but may reflect increased observer effort (Swaine 1982). In the late 1970s, the species declined dramatically throughout the county, particularly in the Severn Vale (A. Jayne *in litt.*). In 1991, a survey of the North Cotswolds revealed a marked contraction in breeding range since the 1968-72 Atlas (P. Dymott *in litt.*).

Northeast England (Yorkshire, Humberside, Durham, Cleveland, Tyne & Wear, Northumberland) Corn Buntings were common throughout Yorkshire during the nineteenth century, although scarce on higher ground (Nelson 1907). By the 1950s, the species had become 'local but not rare' in central and southern parts of the county (Chislett 1952) and declined throughout the 1950s and 1960s before increasing again during the 1970s and 1980s, when it spread into new areas on the edge of its former range (Mather 1986). The increase and expansion are matched by reports of very large wintering flocks in the east of the county, some exceeding 1,000 individuals (Mather 1986). These population trends differ markedly from the general trend throughout Britain during this period. The recent expansion in range has not, however, been apparent in all parts of the county. A tetrad study of Corn Buntings in the Leeds area has revealed a continued decline in range and numbers throughout the 1970s and 1980s (P. Singleton *in litt.*) and similar declines have been apparent around Sheffield (Hornbuckle & Herringshaw 1985), Halifax (M. L. Denton *in litt.*) and Huddersfield (J. E. Dale *in litt.*). Around Doncaster, the species was in severe decline until 1965, since when some increase in range and numbers has occurred (Rhodes 1988). The assertion that the species increased in Yorkshire during the 1970s and 1980s (Mather 1986) does not seem to hold true for more western districts of the county.

Information on changes in the status of the Corn Bunting between North Yorkshire and the Scottish border is scant, although the species was described as a 'common resident' in Northumberland and Durham in 1874 (Hancock 1874). Bolam (1912) described the species as a 'common resident, most common perhaps along the coast' in Northumberland, but the same author wrote 20 years later that the species 'has decreased in some places since so much land went out of cultivation' (Bolam 1932). Further declines in Durham were noted by Temperley (1951), who found that the species was more coastal in its distribution than in previous years and was less common throughout. Atlas data show that many inland areas of Northumberland were abandoned during the 1970s and 1980s.

Northwest England (Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Cumbria, Lancashire) and the Isle of Man The changing status of the Corn Bunting in Lancashire (including the new counties of Merseyside and Greater Manchester) has been well documented. At the end of the last century, Corn Buntings were 'very locally distributed, seldom seen except where grain is grown' (Mitchell 1892). The same author described the disappearance of the species from a number of localities where it had formerly been common, partly because of the conversion of arable land to grazing. Between 1915 and 1935, there was a severe population decline in areas away from the coast, although there was some recovery by 1943 (Oakes 1953). During the early 1950s, there

were local increases in many areas which were ascribed to the conversion of grassland back to arable (Oakes 1953). The species was 'widespread' in the Liverpool area in the early 1940s (Hardy 1941) and 'widespread and common' throughout Lancashire in the early 1970s, although scarcer in the east (Spencer 1973). It may always have been more common and widespread in the west of the county, where the strongholds remain the peat mosslands in southwestern Lancashire, Merseyside and the Fylde. In these areas the species is now apparently more common than it was at the end of the last century. A survey of part of the mosslands in 1991 revealed numbers of breeding territories similar to those found by a survey undertaken in 1952 (M. Jones *in litt.*). There has been no apparent decline in these mossland populations in recent years, but several of the few remaining populations in the higher eastern parts of the county have disappeared (M. Jones and A. Cooper *in litt.*).

The range of the Corn Bunting in Cumbria has always been primarily coastal, avoiding the high ground of the Pennines and the mountains of the Lake District. The species was found mainly in the South Solway region in the north of the county and to a lesser extent in the lower farmland in the south. It was apparently declining in Cumbria as early as the 1880s (Macpherson 1892), although it increased in the north of the county between 1892 and the early 1940s while decreasing in the south (Blezard *et al.* 1943). A decline in the main breeding area around the Solway and the Eden Valley began during the early 1960s. By the time of the 1968-72 Atlas, Corn Buntings were found in a thin strip around the coast, disappearing from most southern and western areas by the time of the 1988-91 Atlas. The Corn Bunting survives in reduced and declining numbers at a few scattered localities in the north of the county (M. Carrier *in litt.*).

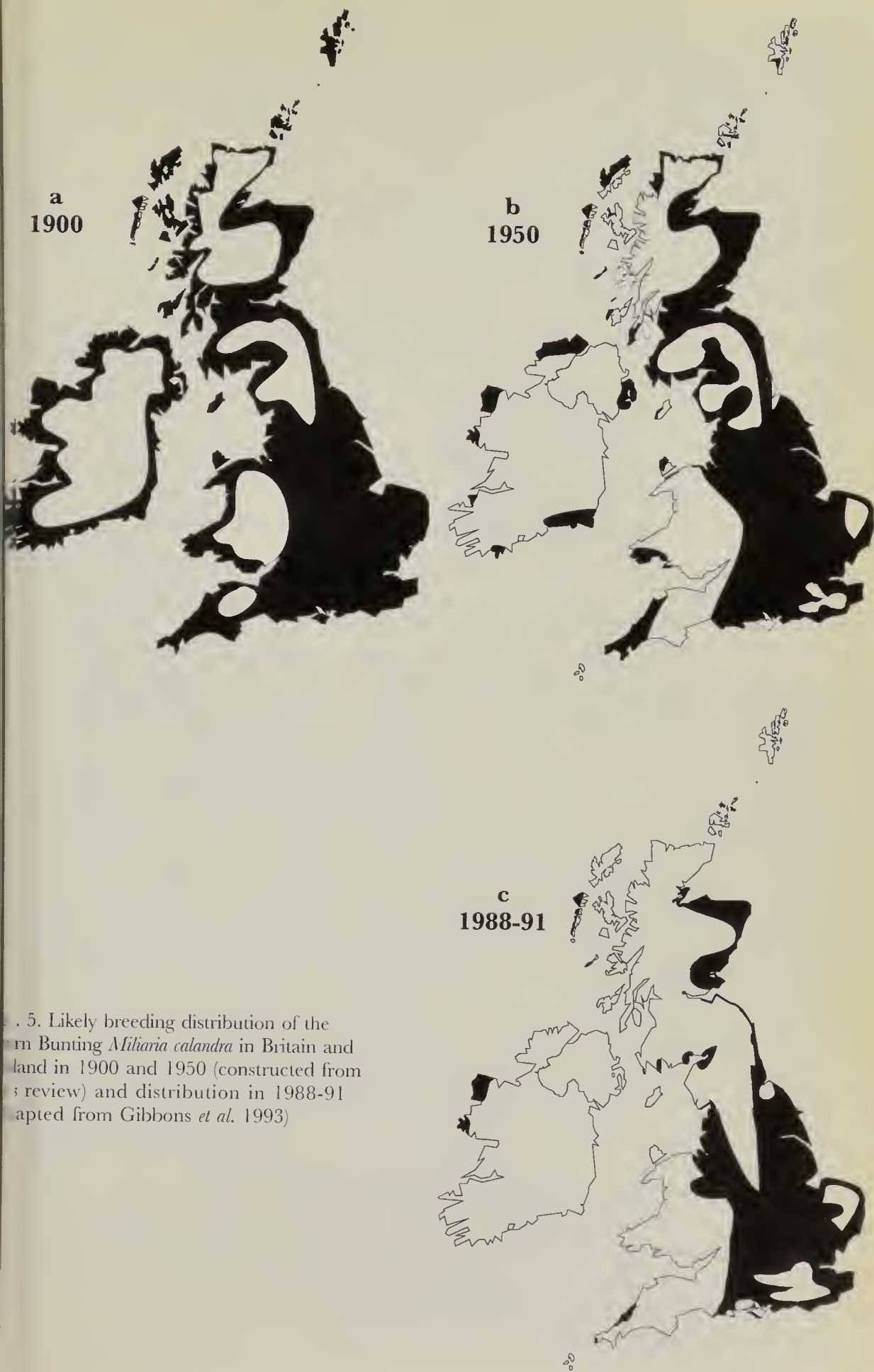
During the middle of the nineteenth century, Corn Buntings were common on the Isle of Man and were frequently killed for the table. The population declined markedly during the last quarter of the century, however, and, although the bird remained plentiful in some coastal districts until 1942 (fig. 2), many other sites were abandoned during the 1920s and 1930s (Cullen & Jennings 1986). By 1948, breeding was confined to a single site, and the species last bred on the Isle of Man in 1956 (Cullen & Jennings 1986).

Conclusions

The results of this historical review have been used to construct the likely breeding ranges of the Corn Bunting in 1900 and in 1950 (fig. 5a, b). Comparison of the assumed distribution in 1950 with that found during the 1968-72 Atlas period reveals few differences, suggesting that the decline of the 1930s had stabilised during the intervening years. The present distribution (fig. 5c) shows that the Corn Bunting again declined markedly between 1968 and 1988.

Throughout Britain, the areas worst affected by the population decline of the late 1970s and 1980s are those which were worst affected by the decline of the 1920s and 1930s. The range contracted more severely in regions where the species was less widely distributed during the 1968-72 Atlas period (fig. 6). In general, this contraction has been southwards and eastwards throughout Britain.

A number of possible causes have been suggested to explain the decline in population and contraction in range of the Corn Bunting during the 1970s and 1980s, although none has been shown to be uniquely responsible. Equally dramatic declines have been observed in British populations of other species closely associated with the agricultural environment, particularly Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* and Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* (Marchant *et al.* 1990), suggesting that changes in agriculture are adversely affecting certain species. Although difficult to quantify, changes in the agricultural environment may also provide some explanation for the widespread population collapse of the 1920s and 1930s and the gradual recovery in many areas during the 1950s and 1960s.



5. Likely breeding distribution of the Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* in Britain and Ireland in 1900 and 1950 (constructed from a review) and distribution in 1988-91 (adapted from Gibbons *et al.* 1993)

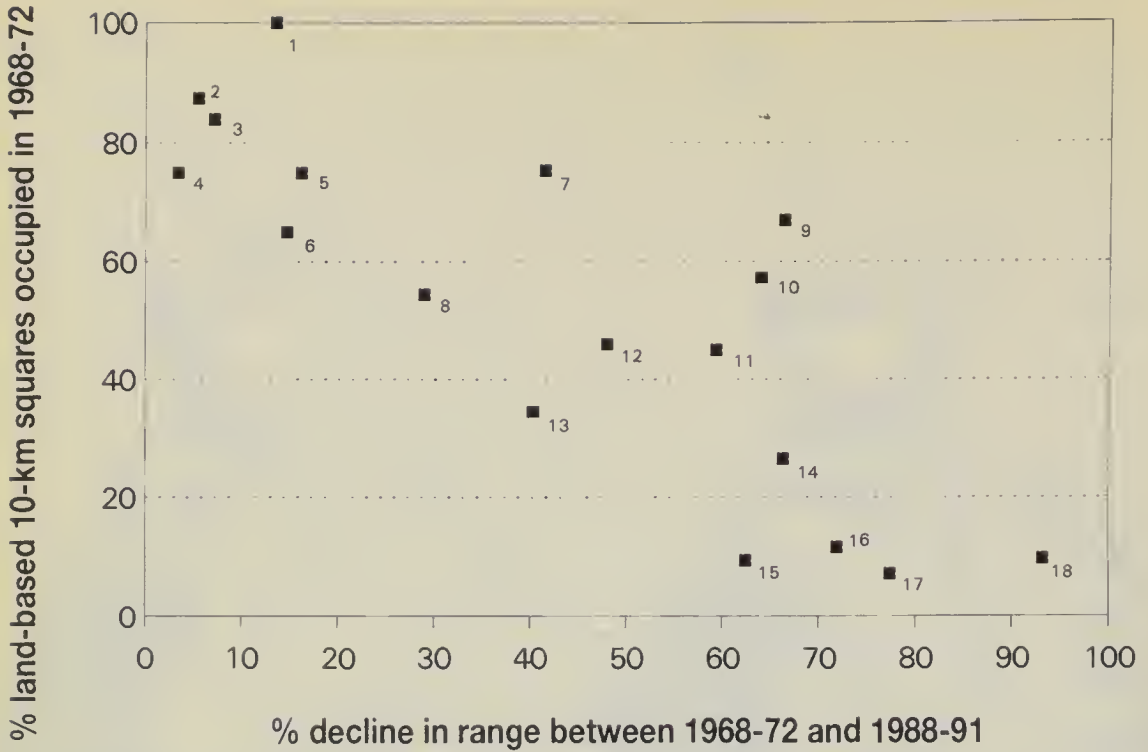


Fig. 6. The relationship between the extent of the range of the Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* during the 1968-72 Atlas (expressed as the percentage of all land-based 10-km squares in which the species was recorded) and the percentage decline in distribution between the 1968-72 and 1988-91 Atlases. The contraction in range was proportionally greater in regions in which the species was less widely distributed during the first Atlas ($r_s = -0.783$, $p < 0.001$). Regions follow those described in the regional accounts: 1 Shetland, 2 S Wales, 3 Ireland, 4 N Wales, 5 Inner Hebrides & SW Scotland, 6 N Scotland, 7 S Scotland, 8 Orkney, 9 Central Scotland, 10 NW England, 11 E Scotland, 12 SW England, 13 Outer Hebrides, 14 NE England, 15 W Midlands, 16 SE England, 17 East Anglia, 18 E Midlands

Between 1875 and 1938, falling prices of imported grain and the lack of a protective tariff caused a depression in the market price of home-produced cereals. This led to a 42% decline in the total cereal acreage in Britain between these years (Grigg 1989). Eastern counties of England were less affected by this change in land-use because of difficulty in establishing good pastures, and the historical evidence suggests that the decline in Corn Bunting populations was less severe in those areas. Since the end of the agricultural depression, there has been a continued decline in small-scale cereal-growing for animal feed in many parts of western Britain, reducing further the cereal acreage in a predominantly pasture landscape. Whether there is a critical ratio of cereals to grass below which Corn Buntings do not breed is not known, although it is interesting to note that the range expansion of the species in parts of the West Midlands has coincided with an increase in cereal acreage in areas previously given over almost entirely to pasture (Harrison *et al.* 1982). Increasing regional specialisation throughout Britain, with western areas becoming increasingly dominated by pasture and eastern areas by arable, has led to a polarisation of the ratio of grass to cereal crops. It has been suggested that this lies behind the population decline of the Yellowhammer in Ireland and parts of western Britain (Prŷs-Jones 1993).

Changes in cereal acreage cannot alone, however, account for the changing status of the Corn Bunting during the twentieth century, since the total cereal



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acreage in Britain as a whole has increased continuously since the late 1930s. The Corn Bunting appears to be particularly attracted to fields of barley *Hordeum* (e.g. Thompson & Gribbin 1986) and the decline in the acreage of this crop over the last 30 years has been used to explain the population decline of the Corn Bunting (O'Connor & Shrubbs 1986). The barley acreage in England and Wales is, however, still higher than at any time between 1930 and 1960 (when populations increased in many counties), and in Scotland the total acreage of barley, although small, increased by 525% between 1950 and 1980 (Thom 1986), with no corresponding increase in the population or range of the Corn Bunting. Indeed, Corn Buntings have disappeared from a higher proportion of areas where the barley acreage increased during the 1970s and 1980s than from areas where this acreage decreased (Gibbons & Gates in press).

Changes in the times of sowing and harvesting of both cereal and grass crops have also been cited as possible reasons for Corn Bunting population declines. Wheat *Triticum* is now almost entirely autumn-sown, as is around half the total barley crop. In addition, the area of hay crops has decreased at the expense of silage, which is usually mown several times in a season. There are several ways in which these changes could have affected Corn Bunting populations. The increasingly early harvesting of autumn-sown cereal crops might have led to increased nest loss, particularly as the Corn Bunting has an exceptionally late breeding season (Crick *et al.* 1991). In Sussex, three broods in a season were not uncommon during the 1930s (Walpole-Bond 1938), whereas today even second broods are rare owing to earlier harvesting of both hay and cereal crops (Harper 1993). The gradual switch from hay to silage may also increase the risk of nests being damaged or preyed on. An analysis of BTO Nest Record Scheme data suggested an increase in the loss of eggs between 1962 and 1989, although this was not statistically significant, perhaps owing to the small sample size (Crick *et al.* 1991). Nest losses due to agricultural operations did, however, increase dramatically after 1970 (Crick *et al.* in prep. a).

Another possible effect of the switch from spring to autumn sowing of cereals is a change in the timing of food availability, although there are reasons for assuming that this effect may benefit Corn Buntings in some parts of Britain. In parts of Scotland, one of the main foods fed to nestlings is unripe grain (Watson 1992a), which is available from winter cereals in northeast Scotland at an earlier date than from spring cereals and at a time when young are likely to be in the nest. This may have contributed to the significant increase in clutch sizes in Scotland over the last 30 years (Crick *et al.* 1991). It is possible, however, that unripe grain may be used only as a substitute for insect larvae when the latter are in short supply.

One of the more likely detrimental effects of the switch from spring to autumn sowing is the loss of winter stubbles. Early ornithological works make frequent reference to the abundance of Corn Buntings on stubble fields in winter, and such fields are still the most important winter habitat of this species (Donald 1993; Donald and Evans in prep.). Stubble has been shown to be an essential requirement of the Cirl Bunting *E. cirlus* in Britain (Evans 1992), and the loss of winter stubbles is likely to have contributed to the

population declines of a number of seed-eating birds. Even where stubbles remain, they are often treated with herbicides soon after harvesting, severely reducing their value as a source of weed seeds through the winter. Until more is known of the dietary requirements of such species, however, this possible cause of the declines in farmland seed-eaters remains conjecture.

Despite all the potentially damaging effects of a change towards autumn sowing on breeding Corn Bunting populations, analysis of Atlas data has shown that birds were lost from far more areas where the acreage of spring-sown barley increased between the two Atlas periods than from areas where it decreased (Gibbons & Gates in press). This, however, does not prove that autumn sowing does not have a deleterious effect on Corn Buntings, because of differences in the geographical distributions of spring-sown and autumn-sown cereals.

The farmland environment has changed dramatically during the course of the twentieth century. The intensification encouraged in the late eighteenth century by the introduction of the Enclosure Acts has accelerated during the twentieth century, resulting in a loss of habitat diversity in the farmland environment. This has led to a corresponding decrease in the abundance and diversity of the associated flora and fauna (Potts 1991). There are many ways in which the changes wrought on the agricultural landscape could have contributed to the decline of the Corn Bunting population. Between 1947 and 1985, around 175,000 km of hedgerows were lost in England and Wales, to increase the efficiency of modern farming machinery (Jenkins 1990). This loss has deprived many birds of suitable nesting habitat, food and song posts. The increased use of agrochemicals has similarly deprived many species of the insects and weed seeds upon which they depend for their food throughout the year. Corn Buntings were also shown to be particularly susceptible to direct poisoning by agrochemicals during the so-called 'mercury catastrophe' which occurred in Sweden during the 1950s and 1960s. The Corn Bunting was one of the hardest-hit species, and its disappearance from several former strongholds was seen as a direct result of poisoning by mercury-based chemicals (Karvik 1964; Otterlind & Lennerstedt 1964). Analysis of BTO Nest Record Cards has revealed evidence of sublethal poisoning of this and other species coincident with the widespread use of organochlorines (Crick *et al.* in prep. b). The improvement of grasslands and increased use of chemical fertilisers has also led to a decline in the species-richness of many areas, as has the abandonment of traditional rotations in favour of monocultures. Despite this, Corn Buntings have declined less in range and remain most numerous in the more intensively farmed areas of eastern and southern England than in the less intensive farmland in the west and north of Britain.

During the population declines of the 1920s-30s and the 1970s-80s, the greatest range contractions took place in the colder north and the wetter west of Britain. Populations elsewhere contracted in range towards coastal areas (for example in northern England) and away from higher ground, whereas populations in southern and eastern England showed far less marked range changes. This might indicate the effects of climatic factors on the decline of the Corn Bunting, which reaches the northernmost limit of its world range in Britain. Colder winters and wetter summers have been cited as factors contributing to

the declines of Corn Buntings in parts of Europe (e.g. Hustings *et al.* 1990; Vidal 1991). The Cirl Bunting is another farmland species which reaches the northern limit of its range in Britain and has also declined greatly during the course of the twentieth century. Whether the effects of climate have contributed to the decline of the Corn Bunting is not known. It is possible that populations in northern and western areas of Britain are not self-supporting and rely on immigration from the species' strongholds in southern and eastern England. A fall in the productivity of these latter populations, caused by one or more of the factors considered above, would then reduce the number able to augment marginal populations.

Population trends of the Tree Sparrow during the course of the twentieth century (Summers-Smith 1989) follow closely those of the Corn Bunting. Both species suffered severe declines in range and numbers during the 1930s, recovered during the 1950s and 1960s, and declined again during the 1980s. In the case of the Tree Sparrow, the recovery of the 1950s and 1960s, which was far more marked than that of the Corn Bunting, was considered to be due to a massive immigration of birds from the Continent. Although little is known of the movements of Corn Buntings, the available evidence suggests that the species does not undertake long-distance movements in western Europe. This may explain the more gradual recovery of the Corn Bunting during the 1950s and 1960s.

It is evident that much remains to be learnt about the exact reasons behind the dramatic decline of the Corn Bunting, although the possibilities discussed above are likely to be at least contributory. Further research into the precise habitat and food requirements and population dynamics of this species is required if we are to understand the declines of this and other farmland birds and act to reverse them. National surveys, such as the BTO's Farmland Bunting Survey, will provide much of the information required, although more autecological studies are also needed.

Changes in Europe

Corn Bunting population declines in Britain and Ireland during the 1970s and 1980s have been reflected throughout northwestern and central Europe (Tucker 1991). The species is declining in 22 of the 34 European countries for which population data are available and is increasing in just two (BirdLife International/European Bird Census Council European Bird Database, April 1993). Declines have been apparent in most central-European countries, whereas in southern Europe populations appear generally to be stable or even increasing. The species has received particular attention in Sweden (Jonsson 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992) and the Netherlands (Hustings *et al.* 1990 & *in litt.*; Schepers *et al.* 1992).

Corn Buntings were abundant on the cultivated plains of southern Sweden during the nineteenth century and bred in 'uncountable numbers' in many areas (Nilsson 1835). Numbers started to decline around the turn of the century (Jonsson 1989) and have continued to do so, although apparently interrupted by shorter periods of recovery. In 1991, intensive searches of all known breeding sites located only ten singing males, and the Corn Bunting is now one of Sweden's most endangered birds (Jonsson 1992). This population

collapse has been blamed on a reduction in habitat diversity resulting in an increase in field sizes, increased use of pesticides, loss of winter stubbles and a series of cold winters (Jonsson 1988). The two remaining breeding areas are characterised by small field units separated by hedgerows and fences with adjacent areas of uncultivated ground (Jonsson 1989).

In the Netherlands, the decline in range and numbers of the Corn Bunting appears to have started during the first half of the twentieth century and was most apparent in the north of the country, particularly at inland sites (F. Hustings *in litt.*). In Friesland, the species was common during the early 1930s (Eyckman *et al.* 1937), but rare by 1942 (Haverschmidt 1942), suggesting a similarity in the timing of the onset of the decline to that noted in many parts of Britain. In Groningen, the species was common before 1940, but began to decline during the 1950s and disappeared during the 1980s (Hustings *et al.* 1990). The decline accelerated during the 1970s and 1980s and the Dutch breeding population fell from 1,200 pairs in 1975 to 150 pairs in 1989 and 100 pairs in 1992 (F. Hustings *in litt.*). Many parts of the breeding range have been abandoned (Hustings *et al.* 1990), although in the southwest of the country populations increased during the 1960s and 1970s (Buisse 1982). The decline was attributed to a number of changes in the agricultural environment, particularly earlier mowing and harvesting, increased use of pesticides, the conversion of hay meadows into grazing land, and improved field drainage. In particular, the decline of a population of Corn Buntings was closely linked to the great increase in area of green maize *Zea* grown at the expense of rye *Secale*, barley and oats *Avena* (Hustings *et al.* 1990). A general reduction in cereal area was thought to be responsible for the declining numbers of Corn Buntings in parts of the Netherlands and Belgium (Schepers *et al.* 1992). The decline of the Corn Bunting in grassland areas of the Netherlands has been followed by declines of other species, suggesting that a decrease in Corn Bunting numbers marked only the first step in a general avian impoverishment of these habitats (F. Hustings *in litt.*). This pattern may now be starting to emerge in Britain, with Scottish and Irish populations of the Yellowhammer showing marked declines between the two Breeding Atlases.

In Schleswig-Holstein (Germany), the breeding population of Corn Buntings fell from 3,000-4,000 pairs in 1955 to 40 pairs in 1987 (von Busche 1989). This decline set in during the early 1960s and accelerated after 1975. It has been attributed to more intensive farming methods and a shortage of food in winter, with many birds apparently dying of malnourishment (von Busche 1989). Similar declines were noted in Eastern Bavaria, where the breeding population fell from 152 singing males in 1975 to 43 in 1988-91 (Vidal 1991). In Austria, a population decline during the 1970s has resulted in a severe range contraction, although in the species' stronghold in Burgenland numbers have fluctuated markedly (A. Ranner *in litt.*). In Switzerland, a population decline which accelerated throughout the 1980s has reduced the Swiss population to around 200 pairs, and the species is now regarded as endangered (H. Schmid *in litt.*). The Danish Breeding Bird Population Index suggests a national population decline of over 50% between 1981 and 1991. Population declines are not limited to northwestern and central Europe. The species has also been declining

rapidly in northern Italy since the early 1970s, the decline again being ascribed to intensification of farming methods (M. Fraissinet *in litt.*). In France the population is apparently stable (D. Berthelot *in litt.*).

In eastern Europe, where farming remains less dependent on mechanisation and the intensive use of pesticides, the Corn Bunting does not seem to be in decline, and populations are apparently stable in Poland (Z. Rohde and A. Sikora *in litt.*), Hungary (Z. Waliczky *in litt.*) and Bulgaria (P. Iankov *in litt.*).

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Summary

At the turn of the century, the Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* was a common or abundant bird of farmland and grassland throughout Britain and Ireland. During the 1920s and 1930s, the population began to decline and the range to contract, possibly as a result of declines in the cultivated area of cereals. Populations in western regions of Scotland, Wales, Ireland and western counties of England were particularly badly affected, although declines were noted throughout the species' range in Britain. The population stabilised during the 1940s, and during the 1950s and 1960s a general recovery became apparent, particularly in eastern areas. During the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, however, the British population of Corn Buntings again declined. Numbers fell by at least 60% and the range contracted by 35% between the early 1970s and the early 1990s. These declines have again been particularly apparent in northern and western regions of Britain and the species is on the verge of extinction as a breeding bird in Ireland, Wales, western Scotland and southwest England. The range of the Corn Bunting contracted more in areas where the species was less widely distributed in the early 1970s and has withdrawn towards strongholds in the arable areas of eastern and southern England. The reasons behind the decline of this species are unclear, but a number of changes in farming practice are implicated. Reductions in the cultivated area of barley, a switch towards autumn sowing of cereals, replacement of hay by silage, and a decline in traditional rotations and mixed farming practices may all have played a part in the changes in numbers and range noted during the 1970s and 1980s. The increased use of pesticides and the removal of hedgerows may have reduced the food supply of Corn Buntings and other declining farmland birds. Climatic factors may also be involved. The declines in numbers and range noted in Britain have been matched by similar trends in some other European countries.

References

General references (particularly national, county or regional avifaunas and breeding atlases) are condensed to the name of the first author, the year of publication and the title. References to papers are given in full. A complete list of full references is lodged with the BTO and is available on request.

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Twenty-five years ago...

On 26th March, Nick Picozzi heard a metallic 'jink' call on Hirta, St Kilda, which proved to have been uttered by the first Evening Grosbeak *Hesperiphona vespertina* to be found in Europe (*Brit. Birds* 64: 189-194).



Reviews

Threatened Birds of the Americas: the ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book. By N. J. Collar, L. P. Gonzaga, N. Krabbe, A. Madrono Nieto, L. G. Naranjo, T. A. Parker III & D. C. Wege. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington DC and London, 1992. 1150 pages. ISBN 1-56098-267-5. \$75.00.

This is the second in a projected four-volume series covering the world's threatened species. Volume I, *Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands*, was published in 1985. Volume III will treat Europe and Asia, and the final volume will handle Australasia, the Pacific and North America (a brief summary for each of the threatened species in North America and the islands of the Neotropical Pacific is included in an appendix of this volume).

The format for the 327 threatened species (cf. Africa's 172) includes sections on Distribution, Population, Ecology, Threats, Measures taken, Measures proposed, and optional Remarks. The accounts range from the understandably short (e.g. the Magdalena Tinamou *Crypturellus saltuarius*, of uncertain taxonomic status and known from only a single specimen taken in the Rio Magdalena Valley in Colombia in 1943) to the exhaustive. The accounts are thoroughly referenced (the list at the end running a full 80 pages) and a great many observers were also contacted personally for information.

Sadly, some of the species have probably already slipped over the edge into extinction. Reading the accounts for Imperial *Campephilus imperialis* and Ivory-billed Woodpeckers *C. principalis* is depressing indeed. The species' accounts quite properly contain much information about the species' ecology. Too often, extinction occurs, or is on the verge of occurring, before the ecology is fully understood (e.g. Bachman's Warbler *Vermivora bachmani*), and this information is vital before an effective conservation plan can be initiated.

Taxonomically, the authors of this work tend to be 'splitters' and, although they base their 'splits' on good evidence, they argue persuasively that by elevating a population to full species status it is more likely to receive protection from the various international conservation organisations and, hopefully, also the relevant governments.

The authors have chosen to list and reference all reasonable recent sightings of rare species, acknowledging that some may not be correct, but properly arguing that it is better to list them with references than to ignore them completely.

An appendix includes a summary for each of the species that are 'near threatened'. The list of 325 (cf. 93 in Africa) is nearly as long as the 'threatened' list, and taken together they indicate just how desperate the situation is in the New World.

Funding for this project almost dried up between 1988 and 1990, but new money was committed from Spanish sources in mid 1990, with the proviso that the publication was to appear in October 1992, exactly 500 years after Columbus reached the New World. It is nice to see now this single redeeming outcome from his 'voyage of discovery'. This book has also been published in Spanish so that it can be put to wide use within the area covered.

Ted Parker, one of the authors of this work, along with internationally respected botanist Alwyn Gentry, and others, were tragically killed this past summer in an aeroplane accident while inventorying habitat in Ecuador for Conservation International. Ted was widely acknowledged as knowing more about South American birds (their identification, vocalisations, behaviour and ecology) than any other person. His death was a tremendous blow to the ongoing bird and habitat preservation efforts in South America. A fund in his name to continue the research has been set up at Louisiana State University.

In summary, one cannot give enough accolades about this book. The rather high cost is completely justifiable given the amount of solid information that is crammed into its 1,150 pages.

JON L. DUNN

To contribute to the Ted Parker Memorial Fund, cheques (payable to LSU Foundation/Ted Parker Memorial Fund) should be sent c/o Van Remsen, Museum of Natural Science, Foster Hall 119, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216, USA. Eds

The Wildfowl of Britain, The Waders of Britain and The Gulls of Britain. Bird Images video guides. Narrated by Bill Oddie. Filmed by Paul Doherty. Paul Doherty, Sherburn-in-Elmet, 1993. Running times 54.42, 56.36, 54.50 minutes. £14.95 each.

This is a bold move into video by Paul Doherty, already well known for his excellent stills photography. The idea is sound, and should appeal to enthusiastic beginners anxious to improve their identification techniques, and to those farther up the pecking order wanting to hone their skills.

Minor criticisms include poor subtitle legibility and abrupt cutting of sequences. Though primarily intended to instruct visually, the script, too, is useful, but occasional lengthy silences would benefit from even more words of wisdom and bird vocalisation. For example, the aggressive Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, coupled with its typical feeding action, and the foot-paddling Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* lend themselves to more expansive text, which is competently delivered by Bill Oddie, though somewhat lacking his usual infectious enthusiasm at times.

However good some books are, birds' typical flight attitudes and 'jizz' are more credible in motion, which these videos amply portray. I particularly liked the sequence of feeding Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, and the temptation to use wildfowl collections resisted.

I hope these videos succeed. I can sense both the frustration and the fun that went into their making, aptly summed up in the acknowledgments to Kim, Katy and Nikki, 'unlucky enough to have a birdwatcher as a father/husband'—I think maybe *lucky* enough! ROGER TIDMAN

The Handbook of Cage and Aviary Birds. Edited by David Alderton. (Blandford, London, 1993. 364 pages. ISBN 0-7137-2346-7. £15.99) An 'aviary guide' for cage-bird enthusiasts, covering 100 species, with 230 of them illustrated by colour photographs. Texts briefly cover range and appearance, with more on how to keep the birds in captivity. Most species are ones never likely to occur naturally in western Europe, but it is interesting to note the following seven entries:

Mourning Dove *Zenaidura macroura* '... easy to care for ... easily induced to breed ... can be kept outside throughout the year ...'

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* '... will breed in a well-planted aviary ... can overwinter in an outdoor aviary ...'

Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps* '... now much scarcer in aviculture than was formerly the case ...'

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* '... have become scarce in aviculture over recent years ... not easy to breed ...'

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* '... hardy and can even winter in an aviary without artificial heating ...'

Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* '... can be kept outside throughout the year ...'

Baltimore Oriole [Northern Oriole] *Icterus galbula* '... one of the more commonly seen members of the group, and will build beautiful nests in aviary ...'

The photographs of birds in captivity, many of them looking far less immaculately well groomed and beautiful than they do in the wild, left me with a feeling of great melancholy. They certainly do not provide good PR for the pro-aviculture lobby. JTRS

Keeping British Birds: an avicultural guide to European species. By Frank Meaden. (Blandford, London, 1993. 305 pages. ISBN 0-7137-2388-2. Paperback £15.99) Not for birdwatchers, who would no doubt cringe at the thought of Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis* in an aviary only 7 feet (2 m) high or Dippers *Cinclus cinclus* confined with no access to running water. Meaden has a mountaineer's approach (i.e. climb it because it's there) to bird-keeping and seems prepared to confine the most unsuitable species in an attempt to improve his 'breeding list'. Should this really be the basis for modern aviculture? What is the point of keeping Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* in captivity when they will readily breed in a nestbox in the garden? Some sections may, however, be useful to people who look after sick and injured wild birds.

KAREN BRADBURY and
IVAN NETHERCOAT



Letters

Black-headed Gulls nesting at Rye Harbour I was somewhat surprised to read (*Brit. Birds* 86: 107) that breeding of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* at Rye Harbour, East Sussex, was first recorded in 1986. My admittedly now failing memory seemed to recall some early-morning bird-ringing back in the 1950s in the ternery at Rye Harbour, when a small number of Black-headed Gull chicks were also ringed. My diary proved to be supportive, with the following entry for 4th July 1959: 'An early morning trip to the Rye Harbour ternery produced just a few chicks of Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*, and one young Black-headed Gull. Two recently fledged Black-headed Gulls were nearby.' This was clearly not the first year of nesting, as two young gulls ringed at the colony in 1958 were recovered in Wales and Portugal later the same year. Indeed, dees Forges & Harber (1963, *A Guide to the Birds of Sussex*) noted a colony near Winchelsea in the first half of the seventeenth century. The first mention of Rye Harbour in more recent times is of 11 pairs nesting in 1947, with 100-150 pairs 'in recent years' (presumably late 1950s or early 1960s).

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Artistic field-note perfection It is indeed refreshing to read such an enthusiastic account as that on the 'Yellow-browed Bunting [*Emberiza chrysophrys*] in Orkney' (*Brit. Birds* 86: 411-416), which is probably the nearest many of us will ever come to experiencing the thrill of finding such a rare bird.

It is, however, the excellent paintings that leave me a little in awe. How do two observers, with just good views 'for never any length of time', produce such perfect paintings which are both so similar?

After 25 years of intensive birdwatching, I would find it difficult to paint a Reed Bunting *E. schoenichus* to such perfection without the aid of photographs and/or other artists' work in front of me. How many birdwatchers submit records that are incomplete simply because they do not make the most of the perhaps brief views of a bird?

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Part of the 'secret' is to know the basic structure of birds precisely. Then, on seeing the bird, the trained eye can spot relative lengths of relevant feathers, relevant widths and colours of edges or tracts which are likely to be important in the identification of species in the particular group, and so on, as well as the basic essentials of shape of the individual being watched. Some bird artists, though certainly not all, have photographic memories which record every detail, which can then be recalled as needed when committing the subject to paper. Other people can do the same with words (an actor learning the whole of a play, for instance), or can remember every move in a chess game for years afterwards. Unfortunately, some of us do not have this knack, but we can all, if we wish, work hard to try to develop it to the best of our various abilities. EDS

Blyth's Pipit identification



Colin Bradshaw, on behalf of the Rarities Committee

There can be few species on the British list quite so enigmatic as Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*. Despite a number of detailed articles on identification of the species (Hall 1961; Alström & Mild 1987; Cramp 1988; Alström 1988; Holt 1991; Lewington *et al.* 1991), it is still largely unknown to most British birders. This may be due to the fact that the identification features are fairly subtle, but, equally, the lack of good photographs of the species may contribute to the feeling that 'We haven't got this one sorted out yet.' More important, perhaps, is the fact that very few British birders have thorough field experience with either the smaller races of Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae* or Blyth's Pipit.

Its place on the British List is no less enigmatic. It owes its current position to the sharp eyes of Kenneth Williamson, who, while examining specimens of Tawny Pipit *A. campestris* in the British Museum in 1963, discovered a specimen of Blyth's Pipit obtained at Brighton, Sussex, in October 1882 (Williamson 1977). It was not accepted in 1963 because of the perceived unlikelihood of such a bird turning up in Britain as a vagrant. It was only when a further bird was found in Finland in 1975 that the record was re-evaluated and accepted. There have been no further accepted records in Britain up to the time of writing, but this seems likely to change, with several claims currently being reviewed (e.g. see Evans 1993). Some of these recent reports of unusual, large pipits have, however, given rise to varying degrees of controversy, none more so than the 'Portland Pipit' (Alström 1989; Grant 1989; Millington 1989; Moorhouse 1989; Richards 1989): a bird at Portland Bill, Dorset, from 16th March to 3rd May 1989. Usually, such instances lead to a clarification of the identification features of the species concerned, but this has not been the case for Blyth's Pipit, although Chris Heard's comprehensive coverage of a bird at Skewjack, Cornwall, from 24th October to 1st November 1990 (Heard 1990) has shed light for many British birders.

In the text to accompany the photographs, I have unashamedly drawn from published information by Per Alström, Chris Heard and Paul Holt, unpublished data in

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the Rarities Committee files, from Graham Catley, Alan Dean and Jimmy Steele, and my own notes from China. The result is not meant to be a definitive identification article, but is more of a conglomeration of important features, most of which are well illustrated by my photographs of an individual grounded in a fall at Beidaihe, Hebei province, China, in May 1993 (plates 39-41).

Similar species

Blyth's Pipit can really be confused only with juvenile Tawny Pipit or Richard's Pipit of all ages. The separation from juvenile Tawny Pipit is fairly straightforward. Whilst both species can be heavily streaked on the upperparts and the breast, the streaks on the upperparts of juvenile Tawny Pipit tend to be made up of a series of dark crescentic scales arranged in lines whilst those of Blyth's Pipit are just ordinary streaks. In addition, Tawny Pipit shows a dark loreal stripe, whereas Blyth's Pipit is bare-faced. To my eyes, they are structurally different, with Tawny Pipit more like a Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, but Blyth's Pipit more like a large Tree Pipit *A. trivialis* (but others disagree on this point, P. Alström *in litt.*). The separation from Richard's Pipit, especially of the smaller eastern race *dauricus*, is more complex, and the rest of the text will be devoted to this.

Jizz and structure

Blyth's Pipit is smaller than the usual race of Richard's, *richardi*, that occurs in Britain. It has a shorter tail and legs, and usually has a shorter, more conical bill, lacking the thrush-like curve on the distal half of the upper mandible characteristic of Richard's. I feel that this bill shape, in combination with some plumage features described later, gives the head of Blyth's Pipit some similarity to that of Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*. Blyth's often perches on bushes and, in long vegetation, creeps around furtively like a Tree Pipit rather than with the strutting gait of a Richard's. Some of these features, especially the short tail, are also apparent in flight, when it may recall one of the smaller pipits rather than Richard's. When seen in the same grassy habitat, however, the two species could not be separated by Blyth's Pipit's much-quoted lack of hovering prior to landing (some do, some do not, of each species). Blyth's Pipit has a shorter hind-claw than does Richard's Pipit: it is still a long hind-claw compared with that of most other passerines, but lacks the ridiculous length of that of Richard's. Care should be exercised with all these points, however, as Richard's Pipits of the race *dauricus* are, in general, smaller, slightly shorter-tailed and thinner-tailed and have a shorter hind-claw than do *richardi* Richard's Pipits. Although they are a trap for the unwary, they still look like Richard's Pipits, however, and display none of the 'small pipit' jizz of Blyth's Pipit.

Plumage

Head

Blyth's Pipit generally has a more bland face than does Richard's, although both have relatively open facial expressions due to the lack of a loreal stripe. On average, Blyth's Pipit has a reduced supercilium, especially in front of the eye, compared with Richard's. On occasions, the supercilium can look a bit

'Groucho Marx-like', with a curved supercilium from just above to behind the eye, as in plates 39-41. This appearance can, however, be mimicked by Richard's Pipit. The crown of Blyth's is more heavily and uniformly streaked with sharp, fine, blackish streaks, which, when seen from a distance, may coalesce to give a capped effect, whereas Richard's tends to have a fairly solid stripe of black streaks over the supercilium, almost a lateral crown-stripe, with a paler crown centre streaked with more-diffuse blackish streaks. The ear-coverts are often a warmer colour on Blyth's than on Richard's and so contrast with the greyish colour of the rest of the head. I was not able to pick this out in the field on those that I saw in China, although it seems to be present in the photographs, so I am unsure how useful a feature it would be in Europe.

Upperparts

The mantle of Blyth's tends to be more heavily marked with broader blackish streaks than is that of Richard's, creating a more contrasting pattern which also contrasts with the relatively plain nape. This pattern can be seen in plates 39-41. In general, the upperparts of Blyth's Pipit tend to be greyer than those of Richard's, which do, however, show considerable variation in both the colour and the degree of upperpart streaking, with *dauricus* being one of the more streaked races and being little different from Blyth's Pipit.

The cardinal plumage feature of Blyth's Pipit seems to be the shape and coloration of the median and greater coverts. This feature, however, holds true only for 'adult-type' coverts. The patterns of juvenile wing-coverts of Blyth's and Richard's are identical, but many first-winters show at least some 'adult-type' coverts, Richard's more often than Blyth's. Juvenile Blyth's and Richard's Pipits both have pointed, clear-cut, dark centres and buffish sides and clean white tips to the median and greater coverts. There is no difference in these feathers between the two species, but the juvenile median and greater coverts are clearly different from the adult-type coverts of both species. Adult and some first-winter Blyth's Pipits show median coverts with less-triangular and more square black centres, less diffuse on the sides, and with generally paler, broader and less rufous-tinged tips than those of Richard's (see fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Median coverts of Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (left) and Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae* (right), each showing two adult-type feathers (*M. Eccles*)

The combination of paler tips and more clear-cut square centres produces a prominent, pale, median-covert wing-bar (although these fresh feather tips are buff, they rapidly wear to a whitish colour). There is, however, considerable individual variation in the colour of the pale tips, which is due to variation in moult. Similar, though less obvious, differences in the pattern of adult-type

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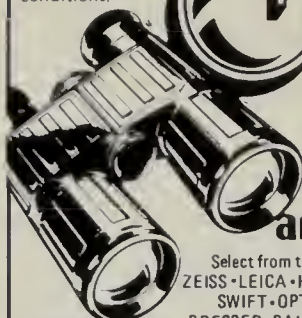
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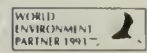
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feathers occur on the greater coverts, producing a bar which is generally paler and better defined than that on Richard's. There is a suggestion, however, that the variation in the colour of both median and greater covert tips across the racial spectrum of Richard's Pipit has not been fully elucidated (A. Dean *in litt.*). On adult, spring Blyth's Pipits, I found the broad white median-covert bar a more obvious feature than the shape of the dark feather centres, yet it seemed equally reliable for separating the two species when they were seen together.

This is unlikely to be the case, however, when dealing with a first-winter vagrant in Britain, which is likely to have most or all median coverts juvenile and, consequently, a less noticeable bar. If not all the feathers of a first-winter bird are 'Blyth's shape', how many will do? It may be that one correctly shaped, adult-type central median covert feather is 'as acceptable as a full set' (P. Alström *in litt.*). Both the innermost and the outermost median (and greater) coverts may be atypical on both Blyth's and Richard's Pipits, so observers should concentrate on the central feather (Alström 1989; Alström *et al.* 1992). This has been borne out by examination of skins by the Rarities Committee, which showed that only the central median coverts have a consistent shape. It is worth pointing out, however, that if two inner and two outer median coverts may be atypical that means that 50% may be atypical.

The problem is compounded by the difficulty of perceiving the shape of these critical feather centres on a moving bird. This is particularly so for birds with both adult and juvenile-type feathers in the median coverts (i.e. many first-winters) or adults in active moult, as there is then no consistent median-covert bar to use as a point of reference for assessing the shape. Adjoining coverts overlap and it is easy for a 'tapered edge' to be interpreted as a 'flat front'. How this can arise is best seen by studying photographs of various pipits. A video taken by Alan Shaw in India also illustrates just how difficult it can be to 'fix' the covert pattern on a moving bird. While the validity of the shape of the centres of the central median coverts may not be in doubt, the field perception of these feathers may be a different matter. This feature is best judged, perhaps, on good-quality photographs, when there can be little doubt about the shape of the relevant feathers.

Another feature discussed at the meeting on Texel in 1991 was the possible absence of a pale web on the proximal half of the longest tertial. The photographs (plates 39-41) seem to show a continuous pale web for all of the outer tertial and so suggest that this is not a feature of Blyth's Pipit. Another feature mentioned by both Peter Lansdown and John Miller (*in litt.*) is the ratio of exposed tertials to exposed tail. There seems to be a constant difference with little overlap: birds with a tertial-to-tail ratio of 1 to 1.1 or less would seem to be Blyth's Pipits, whilst those with a ratio of 1 to 1.3 or greater are Richard's. There are three points to make about this: first, it has been checked on only a small number of photographs and skins, so it may be unreliable (especially with skins, as tail projection is partly dependent on how the skin was prepared); secondly, this ratio may vary for some of the races of Richard's (e.g. *dauricus*) and needs to be checked against these; thirdly, despite good optics and a reasonable eye, I am pretty sure that I could not differentiate these ratios in the field. It may, however, prove to be useful with photographs.

Underparts

There are some slight differences between the two species, but it is important to see the bird head-on to judge these correctly. The underparts of Blyth's Pipits are usually more uniformly coloured than those of Richard's, being a pale buff with a richer wash down the flanks. The colour is shown well on the photographs, and my rather poetic field notes record the colour as 'pale apricot'. This feature should be used with caution, however, as I have seen small Richard's Pipits, presumably *dauricus*, in China showing very warmly coloured underparts, and similar birds have been noted at Donna Nook, Lincolnshire, and Snettisham, Norfolk, in 1988 (this latter bird also gave some peculiar calls, so perhaps it was a Blyth's).

There is a tendency for Blyth's to show a wider gorget of streaks across the breast, but there is overlap between the two species. To my eyes, the breast streaking seems to be somewhat neater and less blurred than on Richard's Pipit, but others disagree (P. Alström *in litt.*). The malar stripe is said to be less obvious on Blyth's Pipit, but I did not find this a useful separating feature in the field, and others doubt its validity.

Tail

There is usually a difference between the tail patterns of Blyth's and Richard's Pipits in the amount of white on the two outer tail-feathers, especially the second. This was first described by Hall (1957). The outer tail-feather and the outer web of the second outer tail-feather of both species are essentially all-white. The inner web of the second outer tail-feather of Blyth's Pipit tends to have a triangular-shaped white patch, broadest at the tip and narrowing quickly, whilst Richard's Pipit tends to have a white stripe that runs parallel to the shaft. This feature can sometimes be observed, in the field, when a bird is preening in the open, especially when perched on a bush or rock. Once again, however, there is considerable overlap between the two species, so that this is, at best, only a supporting feature (van den Berg *et al.* 1993). Since, in the field, a tail is fanned rather than opened laterally (or the feathers examined individually), overlapping feathers can produce erroneous impressions even in the presence of appropriate patterns, and field impressions may not be enough.

Call

The single best feature for separation is the calls, but even these need some care and a lot of experience. There are two basic calls given by Blyth's which are relevant to Western Europe. The first is a sibilant, buzzing 'pssheoo' with a downward inflection at the end. To the experienced ear, this is different from the typical sparrow-like 'schreep' of Richard's Pipit, but, personally, I found the separation quite difficult as, unfortunately, many calls of Richard's Pipit are slightly atypical, being less harsh and thus similar to the call of Blyth's Pipit. When both species are calling together, however, it is quite easy to differentiate the calls. The timbre of the call of Blyth's is somewhat like the first half of the flight-call of Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus*, but lacks the long-drawn-out sibilance of the second half of that call. The second call of Blyth's Pipit is an abrupt 'chup', quite similar to one of the calls of Tawny Pipit.



8 & 41. Above and below, Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*, China, May 1993 (Colin Bradshaw)

40. Above, Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*, China, May 1993 (Colin Bradshaw)

42. Below, Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae dauricus*, China, May 1990 (Colin Bradshaw)



Flocks of Richard's Pipits occasionally seem to 'chip' to each other, but I have never heard a lone bird make that call. 'Paddyfield Pipit', commonly regarded as a race of Richard's *A. (n.) rufulus* from India, does give a 'chep' or 'chup' call, so it is clear that there is variation in calls across the species group. Fortunately, Blyth's Pipit will often combine the two calls in a fairly unmistakable 'pssheoo chup chup'. Any bird calling like this would have to be a Blyth's Pipit. Flocks of Blyth's Pipits emit a rather strange sound, produced by a combination of calls, which is reminiscent of a flock of Twites *Carduelis flavirostris*, but this is unlikely to be useful in Europe.

Other features

Other supposed Blyth's Pipit features, such as primary projection and leg colour, are of no value in identification of this species.

Acknowledgments

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Summary

The identification of Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* is not easy, although the combination of subtle structural and plumage features gives it a distinctive nature. Any large pipit which is short-tailed, with the jizz of a Tree Pipit *A. trivialis*, a short broad-based bill and shorter hind-claw, capped appearance and otherwise plain face, distinct wing-bars and squared-off median coverts, with a uniform buffy breast, belly and flanks, and with the distinctive calls, may stand a chance of getting accepted. It would need, however, to be photographed or to be seen and well described by a large number of good observers.

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Monthly marathon



The closing date for entries for the twelfth stage of the current competition (plate 6) was 28th February, after this issue will have been despatched; the answer will be given next month. For this month's picture, see below.

43. Sixth 'Monthly marathon'; fourteenth stage: photo no. 93. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 29 of the January issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th April 1994



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This summary covers the period 17th January to 13th February 1994

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Gruinard Bay (Highland), intermittently, 3rd-12th February. **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* Typical wintering numbers in Britain; Lake Hunshigo (Co. Down), mid January to at least 12th February (species very rare in Ireland). **Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus* Up to three, Isle of Sheppey, intermittently from 7th to 13th February. **Pintail Snipe** *Gallinago stemura* Single in flight, Ballyleary Bog, Great Island, Cork City (Co. Cork),

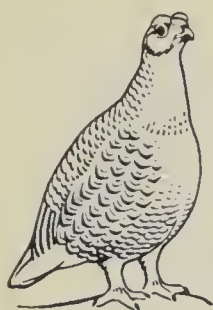
intermittently to 22nd January (if accepted, would be first record for Europe). **Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia* Leith Docks, Edinburgh (Lothian), 6th February. **Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta* Typical winter numbers in Britain; The Cull, Wexford (Co. Wexford), to at least 12th February; Waterfoot (Co. Antrim), from 4th-12th February (first record for Northern Ireland). **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* Fowlmere (Cambridgeshire), 30th January to 13th February.



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Notes

Barn Swallow trapped by greater burdock On 5th August 1989, at Waghäusel, close to the River Rhine near Speyer, Germany, Dr D. F. Owen, Wega Schmidt-Thomée, Nicole Wiegand and I came across two wildlife photographers about to free a juvenile Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* which was entangled by a cluster of large burrs of greater burdock *Arctium lappa*. After taking photographs (plate 44), we cut it free and gently removed the strongly hooked burrs from its plumage. When released, it flew off strongly, apparently none the worse, and joined the hordes of other Barn Swallows hawking insects over the open pools. One wonders how often small birds, especially weaker ones than swallows, become entrapped in this way. It seems possible, however, that the short and weak legs of hirundines (Hirundinidae) make them more vulnerable than, for example, the long-legged Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis* which we watched feeding on burdock seeds on the same day.

JOHN F. BURTON

Wasserturmstrasse 53, D-69214 Eppelheim, Heidelberg, Germany



44. Live Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* attached to greater burdock *Arctium lappa*, Germany, August 1989 (J. F. Burton)

Goldcrest corpse stuck on lesser burdock On 26th September 1989, at South Walney Nature Reserve, Cumbria, I found a dead Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* with its right wing and flank impaled/tangled in a seedhead of lesser burdock *Arctium minus*. The site was only about 20 m from where the bird had been ringed as a juvenile on 6th September 1989. In that same autumn, Goldcrests were also twice found trapped in spiders' webs on the reserve (cf. *Brit. Birds* 77: 569).

TIM DEAN

Woodside, Blawith, Coniston, Cumbria LA12 8EQ

Tim Dean supplied a photograph showing the dead Goldcrest attached to the burdock head. Reports of incidents such as those described above by Mr Burton and Mr Dean have included Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* as well as Barn Swallows becoming trapped on spiky vegetation (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 54: 245, 362), and Goldcrests succumbing as a result of becoming entangled in burdock (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 51: 276). Dr J. T. R. Sharrock has commented that such incidents may not be rare. Within the space of a few months, and on separate bushes only 2 m apart, he noted a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* flying onto the thorns of a bramble *Rubus* and becoming entangled long enough to fall prey to a domestic cat, and a Blackbird *T. merula* dying as a result of its primaries having become entangled in the network of symmetrically branched twigs of a mock orange *Philadelphus*. EDS

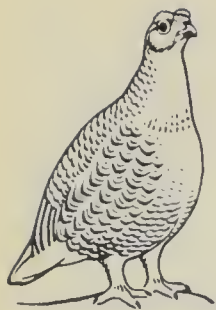
Small prey in diet of Shags Johnston *et al.* (1990, *Bird Study* 37: 5-11) criticised the use of pellets in the analysis of the diet of Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*, stating that, in order for such material to provide a meaningful description of the diet, one has to be certain that the results are not seriously biased.

A juvenile female Shag was obtained from Lough Hyne, Co. Cork (Berrow, 1990, *Irish Nat. J.* 23: 284), and its stomach contents analysed. Of the 107 prey items identified, painted gobies *Pomatoschistus pictus* were the most frequent (80.4%), followed by the thick-lipped grey mullet *Crenimugil labrosus* (11.2%); sand-smelt *Atherina presbyter* (3.7%), prawn *Leander squilla* (2.8%) and sprat *Sprattus sprattus* (1.9%) were also present. Where possible, individual fish were measured from head to tail fork: the largest was a painted goby measuring 63 mm, but the mean size for this species was 34.9 mm (± 1.5 ; $n = 40$); eight mullet averaged slightly longer, at 45.4 mm (± 1.8). It is apparent from this that the size of fish recovered was small, and no remains of significantly larger fish were detected. Gobies in general have rarely been identified in the diet of Shags (*BIVP*, vol. 1).

Pellet analysis assumes that some part of the prey item will resist digestion and be ejected in the pellet. Back calculation of prey size selected also assumes that the chosen structure (e.g. otolith) will also remain unaffected by the digestion process. It is unlikely that any part of a fish as small as those revealed in this analysis will resist digestion, and a considerable quantitative and qualitative bias in the dietary analysis may therefore result. This evidence supports the conclusion of Johnston *et al.* that, until such time as fundamental questions concerning pellet production can be answered, pellets should be treated with caution when used in dietary analysis.

SIMON BERROW

Department of Zoology, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland



Ecological disasters in the Gulf

UNFORTUNATELY this is nothing new: more disaster in the Gulf, yet again laid at the door of Iraq.

The Gulf wars delayed one major project: the draining of the marshes of southern Iraq. Now, even with massive international sanctions, Iraq seems hell-bent on the destruction of this outstanding wetland.

Each winter, the 20,000 km² of shallow lakes and reed-beds play host to millions of northern waterfowl and other birds, including six globally threatened species: Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*, Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* and Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*. Another 71 species occur there in internationally important numbers. There are also two endemic species: Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis* and Iraq Babbler *Turdoides altirostris*. The area is also a vital staging post for vast numbers of migrants, in both spring and autumn, midway between their breeding grounds in northern Europe/Asia and their wintering quarters in Africa.

The marshes, fed by the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, are also home to the Marsh Arabs, an ancient tribe that has adapted to a unique life-style. There are serious political (and religious) overtones in the draining programme. The disaster is being brought about by the construction of a huge canal which discharges the water from the two rivers directly into the Gulf. It is estimated that some two-thirds of the marshes will have been drained by the end of 1993.

An independent study of the environmental impact is being undertaken by the Ecosystems Research Group of the University of Exeter, but it seems a sad state of affairs that the international community seems unwilling to save the homeland of people with a unique tribal life-style, a place which is also one of the world's greatest ecological treasures.

Autumn migration survey in Israel

Experienced helpers are again needed for the annual Raptor, Stork and Pelican Migration Survey in the Northern Valleys of Israel, during 10th August to 20th October 1994 (see *Brit. Birds* 86: 146 for the requirements). Write with personal details to Dan Alon, Autumn Survey, Ruth st. 25, Haifa, 34103, Israel; phone 972-4-389973.

'Birds of Jordan'

A book on the birds of Jordan is currently being prepared by Ian Andrews, based mainly on the three years he recently spent in that country. Although some additional information has already been sent to Jörg Wittenberg and himself, the author is keen to make the book as comprehensive a summary as possible. All records will be gratefully received and acknowledged. Please send Jordanian records (old or recent) to Ian Andrews, 39 Clayknowes Drive, Musselburgh, Midlothian EH21 6UW.

Young Ornithologists of the Year

The 1993 awards were presented by Barbara Young, the RSPB's Chief Executive, at The Lodge on 5th January 1994. As is traditional, the three winners (*Brit. Birds* 87: 45) then spent some time in the field together (plate 45).

The year 1993 was the seventeenth in which

the competition has been sponsored by *British Birds*; as noted when first announced (*Brit. Birds* 70: 305), we greatly welcome the opportunity to encourage high standards of fieldcraft and recording by the new generation of birdwatchers.



45. YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR. Left to right: Tom Fieldsend (intermediate winner), David Parnaby (senior winner) and Christine Murphy (junior winner), Bedfordshire, January 1994 (*A. Hay/RSPB*)

S. W. M. Hughes (1938-1993)

We are very sorry to report the untimely death of Stuart Hughes in September 1993, after several months of illness. Stuart was a stalwart of the Sussex Ornithological Society, having recently served for five years as its Vice-President, and having had no fewer than 26 scientific papers published in the *Sussex Bird Report*. His interests were bird distribution, status, movements and breeding populations, and the papers covered a wide range of species from Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* to Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*.

Stuart was the essence of the county bird man, nowadays a threatened species. All his considerable energies and talents were devoted to finding out more about the birds of his own county. He leaves an unrivalled, and perhaps unrepeatable, legacy for the county avifauna. He will be sadly missed. (*Contributed by Tony Marr*)

Swarovski Station

The WWF station for birds of prey and owls in Haringsee, Austria, which has existed since 1975, will from now on be named Swarovski Station for Birds of Prey.

Swarovski Optik will be supporting the work of the Station, which cares for approximately 300 birds of prey and owls per year, for the next three years. The international President of WWF, HRH Prince Philip, expressed his thanks on behalf of WWF Austria to *Swarovski Optik* Managing Director, Gerhard Swarovski.

The Station is also involved in breeding Lammergeiers *Gypaetus barbatus*, having released more than 30 captive-bred individuals in a re-colonisation programme in the Alps.

For further information, please contact John Brinkley, Sales & Marketing Manager, Optik Division, Swarovski UK Ltd, Fleming Way, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 2NL.

New French magazine



Ornithos is a new magazine for French and European bird-watchers, with papers and notes on identification, status and ecology of birds in France, the annual

Rarities Committee (CHN) and on rare breeding birds in France (all in French, with English summaries and captions). It is supported by the Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO) and edited by Dr Philippe J. Dubois and Marc Duquet.

There are two issues per year (March and September). The subscription rate is 150 F (EC countries) or 180 F (outside EC). For further information, write to *Ornithos*, LPO, BP 263, 17305 Rochefort Cedex, France.

Golden Oriole Survey 1994

The Golden Oriole Group is undertaking a full census of breeding Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* in the UK in 1994. This will generally involve two-hour visits to each potential site in the period mid May to mid June. Although the bulk of the survey will be carried out in East Anglia, it is hoped to get coverage in other parts of the UK which have suitable breeding habitat for orioles. All those helping with the survey will receive instructions and documentation, and other guidance as appropriate. If you are interested in helping, please get in touch with Jake Allsop, Secretary GOG, 5 Bury Lane, Haddenham, Cambridge CB6 3PR, telephone Ely (0353) 740540; Fax 0353 741585.

March 'Bird Watching'

The March issue of the monthly magazine *Bird Watching* includes an up-to-date feature on buying binoculars; 24 pages of local sightings, regional reviews, site guides and rarity pictures; a photo feature on Britain's raptors; advice from Derek Moore on 'how to enter and win the In Focus County Birdrace'; where to go and what to see in Borders and Dyfed; and a look at the new Nikon 78-mm scope.

Ode to 'The Famous Grouse' puzzle

Last December's Christmas puzzle (see also page 59) attracted much attention as usual, but Bryan Bland's cryptic drawing also provided poetic inspiration for one entrant, Colin Kirtland:

*I wandered lonely as a dude
Who roams among the hills and vales
When all at once I saw a brood,
A host of little crakes and rails.
Beside the ditch, between the leas,
Scuttling and hiding in the trees.
Just when I thought they'd disappeared,
I found one skulking in my beard,
And then two more, of different sorts
Were crawling round inside my shorts.
But those that I remember best are
The ones I spotted in my Questar!*

(With apologies to William Wordsworth and Bryan Bland.)

New Recorders

John Barnes, Fach Goch, Waunfawr, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 4YS, has taken over from Alan Davies as Recorder for Gwynedd (Merionethshire).

David Wright, Graig Eithin, Mynydd Bodafon, Llanerhymedd, Anglesey LL71 8BG, has taken over from Alan Davies as Recorder for Gwynedd (Anglesey).

Howard Bunn, 16 Vivian Avenue, Grimsby DN32 8QF, has taken over from Graham P. Catley as Recorder for Lincolnshire.

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Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Recent reports

is on page 143.

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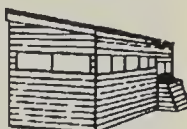


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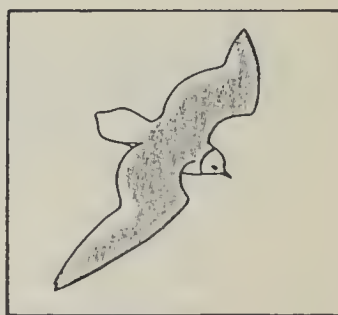
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Replacement December pages

Although correctly positioned in page-proofs, fig. 1 and fig. 2 on pages 593 & 594 were accidentally transposed in the December 1993 issue. Copies of the relevant four-page section have been supplied to the binders (London Journal Bindery) for automatic substitution in every bound volume. For subscribers who do not send their issues for binding, this four-page section is inserted in the centre of this issue and can be substituted by those who wish to do so. Alternatively, the two maps could be cut out and pasted over the incorrect ones. We apologise to *British Birds* subscribers for this error.

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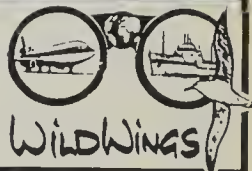
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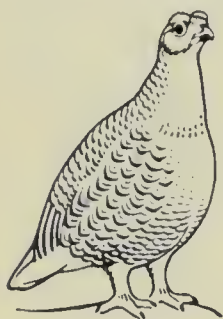
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15x, 20x, 30x or 40x EP	94
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30x (WA) eyepiece	179
60x eyepiece	115
20-45x zoom EP	179
Camera adaptor	200
Mod for other cameras	18
Quality filter	13
Rubber hood	8
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30x (WA) eyepiece	149
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60x eyepiece	125
77x eyepiece	138
Cam. adaptor 800mm	150
Cam. adaptor 1200mm	230
Skua case	45
27x (WA) Screw-in-eyepiece	74
TS-611 body (45°)	(279) 316
TS-612 body	(259) 296
TS-613 ED Prominar Body (45°)	(589) 656
TS-614 ED Prominar Body	(529) 596
20x (WA) eyepiece	74
27x (WA) eyepiece	109
20-60x zoom eyepiece	127

TS prices include a carrying case but a Skua stay-on case is available @ 45	
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TS

TS-611 body (45°)	(279) 316
TS-612 body	(259) 296
TS-613 ED Prominar Body (45°)	(589) 656
TS-614 ED Prominar Body	(529) 596
20x (WA) eyepiece	74
27x (WA) eyepiece	109
20-60x zoom eyepiece	127
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TBS 80 (45°) body	(425) 475
TBG/TBS 80 HD	(669) 725
TBS 65 (45°) body	(329) 399
TBG 65 body	(329) 399
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20x (WW) eyepiece	138
30x or 40x eyepiece	87
70x (WW) eyepiece	189
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Stay-on case for TB5/TB9	45

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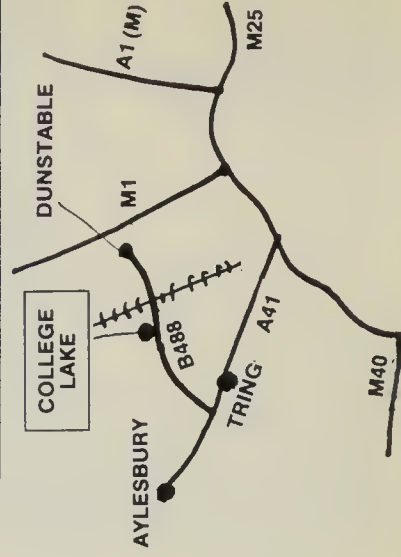


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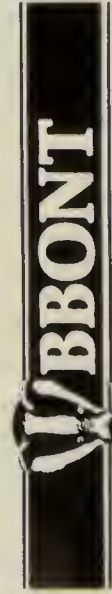
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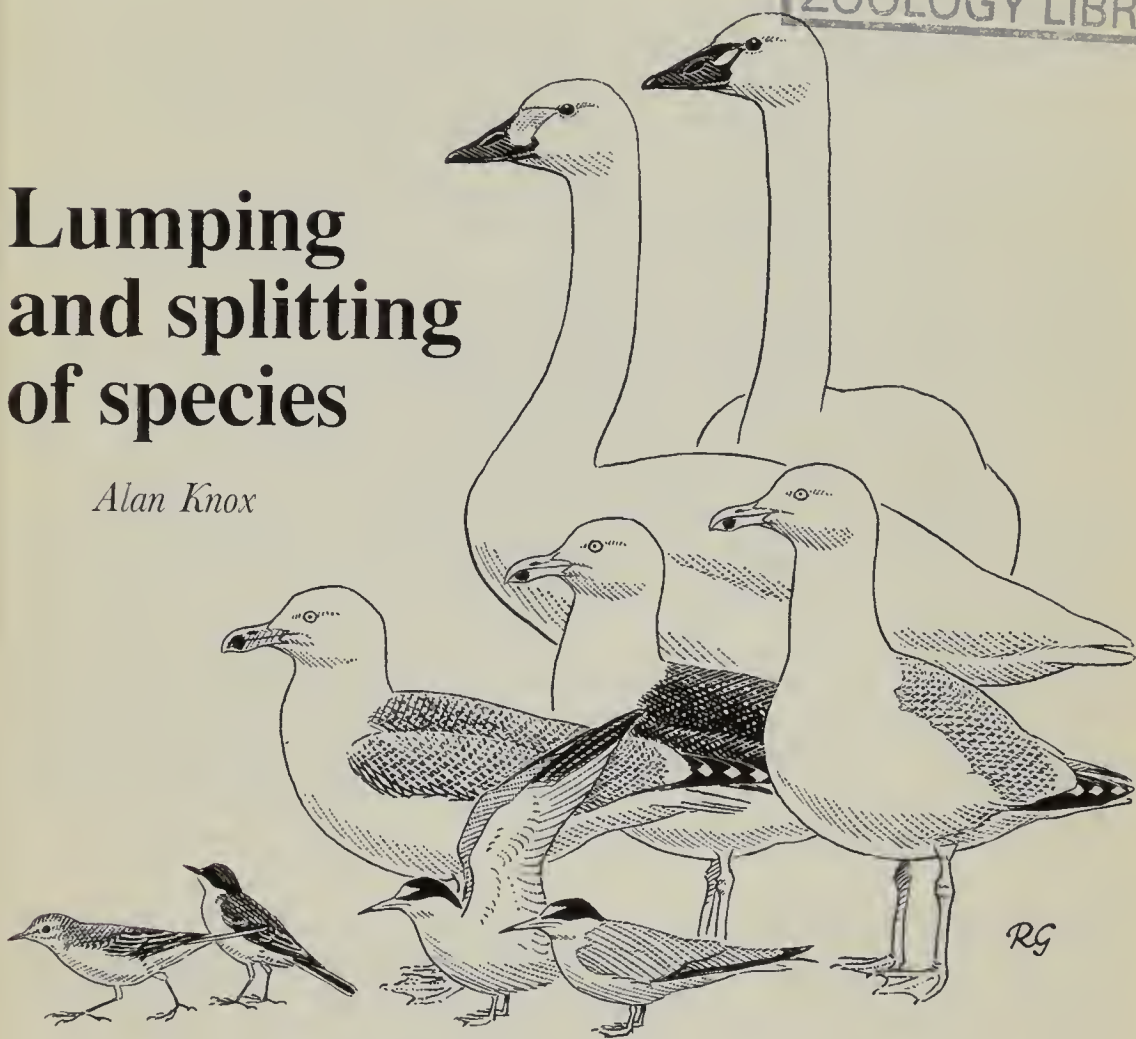
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Lumping and splitting of species

Alan Knox



One aspect of taxonomy that has always interested birdwatchers is the lumping and splitting of species, that is when two or more species are grouped together and called just one—the lumping, or when one species is split into two or three. Many ageing birders will remember the Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*. Baltimore Oriole disappeared as a full species along with Bullock's Oriole *I. bullockii* when these two were lumped, together with a third former species, to become Northern Oriole *I. galbula* in the 1960s. More recently, there has been the lumping together of Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Two-barred Warbler *P. plumbeitarsus* and Green Warbler *P. nitidus* into *P. trochiloides* (BOU 1993). To balance this, there has been the splitting of Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* into American Golden Plover *P. dominica* and Pacific Golden Plover *P. fulva*, and Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* into three species, Rock Pipit *A. petrosus*, Water Pipit *A. spinoletta* and Buff-bellied Pipit *A. rubescens* (BOU 1986; Knox 1987, 1988).

The reason why species receive such a lot of attention in the first place is that they are often perceived as the basic units of biological and evolutionary diversity. Species of birds are what we see every day when we are birdwatching. On a more trivial level, birders want to know what can be ticked and what can not—because most do not tick subspecies.

There are, however, other reasons for interest in species: in particular, government and conservation agencies are often concerned only with full species. International conservation interest in the Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* grew only when it was suggested that it might be three separate species of which one was almost extinct (Bourne 1983). Nearer to home, the splitting of Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica* from Common Crossbill *L. curvirostra* raised the general awareness of the importance of the old Caledonian pine forests in Scotland (Knox 1975, 1976, 1990; Voous 1978). The limited conservation interest in races is partly historical and partly a result of the unmanageably large number of vulnerable subspecies that would need to share the meagre financial resources which are available. The preoccupation with species is unfortunate and short-sighted, because what matters is separate genetic lineages, be they species or subspecies. Indeed, it is surely important that all populations of birds should be protected, for many will have evolved adaptations to their local environments. Furthermore, some of the races of today will be the species of the future.

In this paper, I wish to look at the difficulties that seem to occur at the species boundary, and why lumping and splitting take place. It has been said that lumping and splitting go in cycles, but this is not strictly true. As will be seen later, there are good reasons why splitting should be on the increase at the moment. After reviewing some of the background, brief details will be given of a few Western Palearctic examples.

The nature of species

To begin with: what is the problem? We all know what species are: a Blackbird *Turdus merula* is a Blackbird and a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* is a Song Thrush. What separates one species from another is the fact that the two do not interbreed: Blackbirds mate with other Blackbirds and not with Song Thrushes. This is referred to as the Biological Species Concept (BSC: Mayr & Ashlock 1991; Knox 1994).

The problem with the species boundary arises from the way new species evolve. Indeed, the problem exists *because* species evolve, rather than being created spontaneously. Among birds, new species evolve after one species splits into two (or more) populations which become geographically isolated. This can happen when the range of the original species is fragmented, perhaps owing to climatic change or rising sea level, or when a small group of birds colonises an island, whether at sea or an island of habitat on land. Geographic isolation is the key point. Because the populations are isolated, they start to accumulate slight genetic differences which build up over time into major genetic differences. This is helped if the environments are even slightly different and the populations begin to adapt to local conditions. It also happens more quickly in small populations, as might be found on small islands.

If the separate populations reach a state where they are fairly different in measurements or appearance, they might formally be described as separate subspecies (or races), or they might be treated as separate species.

Species or subspecies?

Evolution continues all the time, and often it is not easy to tell if the populations have become differentiated sufficiently for speciation or are still 'just' subspecies. Determining whether the populations should be treated as species or subspecies is fairly easy if the geographic or habitat barrier between them breaks down for any reason:

(a) There would probably be few differences between populations which had been separated for only a short time. They would most likely interbreed freely and merge back together, so were clearly not separate species.

(b) If they interbreed to a limited extent, it is important to discover such things as how frequently the interbreeding occurs and the success of the hybrid matings (Short 1969). A few hybrids are not of great concern and will probably be biologically insignificant. They may not even be fertile. If there are many hybrids, this may suggest that the forms are not reproductively isolated and that they have not yet reached the stage of separate species.

(c) If the forms come together and do not interbreed, they will be treated as species.

Interesting phenomena sometimes occur, as when the Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus* expanded its range into that of the Great Spotted Woodpecker *D. major* in central Europe earlier this century (Bauer 1957). As the Syrian Woodpeckers advanced, there were insufficient birds of their own species for them to mate with, so they hybridised with Great Spotted Woodpeckers. When the boundary of the range expansion moved on and Syrian Woodpeckers became commoner in the same area, they mated only with their own species.

If populations of birds never come together during the breeding season, it becomes more difficult to determine whether they are reproductively isolated other than by geography and distance. At this point, much depends on the quality of the information that is available and the judgment of the taxonomist.

Generally, for forms that are not in contact, a study of congeneric species is useful. It should be possible to determine if the degree of morphological or behavioural difference between the geographically isolated forms is greater or less than the differences found between other members of the same genus that are known to be good species. If the extent of the differences in plumage colour or in measurements is as great as between known species, then our isolated forms would normally be called species as well. If the differences are comparable only with differences between known subspecies, then the forms under study would normally be treated as subspecies.

There is an element of subjectivity in this. Differences of opinion are valid, provided they are based on realistic data and comparisons, rather than merely 'gut feelings'. Nevertheless, this is one of the greatest weaknesses of the BSC.

Speciation and differentiation

The foregoing exposes another problem. The degree of morphological differentiation is not necessarily in proportion to the genetic or evolutionary differences between forms. It is not always possible to look at two forms and

say 'These are so different that they must be species', or 'These are quite similar so they must be races.' There can be differentiation without speciation and, conversely, speciation can be accompanied by minimal morphological differentiation. Many birders seem to think that if birds look different they must be distinct species, and if they look the same they are not, but this does not follow. A few examples will illustrate this:

(a) *Differentiation without speciation* Despite the obvious differences, visible even at long range, Hooded Crows *Corvus corone cornix* and Carrion Crows *C. corone corone* are currently treated as races, not as separate species. Similarly, the Middle Eastern race of the Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros semirufus*, with its bright red underparts and reduced white in the wing, is quite unlike the race which breeds widely in western and central Europe. Even so, it is not treated as a separate species (see e.g. Jonsson 1992, pages 391-393, for illustrations). There are many other examples of distinct races which show differences greater than those between other good species.

(b) *Speciation without differentiation* The two European treecreepers, Eurasian *Certhia familiaris* and Short-toed *C. brachydactyla*, are very similar yet are treated as separate species (Harrap 1992; Svensson 1992). Furthermore, the almost indistinguishable North American Brown Creeper *C. americana* is also treated as a full species. North America furnishes several other interesting species-pairs, including Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* and Clark's Grebe *A. clarkii*, recognised by the AOU as distinct species only as recently as 1985 (Storer & Nuechterlein 1992; AOU 1985); Great Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* and Semipalmated Plover *C. semipalmatus*; and Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus* and Allen's Hummingbird *S. sasin*. In the case of the hummingbirds, even the calls are similar. Among the most infamous examples of different species looking alike must surely, however, be the *Empidonax* flycatchers, especially the 'Western' Flycatcher *E. difficilis*, only recently shown to comprise at least two species: the Pacific-slope Flycatcher *E. difficilis* and the Cordilleran Flycatcher *E. occidentalis* (Johnson & Marten 1988; Kaufman 1990).

Lumping and splitting

Lumping and splitting can arise when new information becomes available, when different taxonomists interpret the status of geographically isolated forms in different ways and when there are differences of opinion about the relative importance of hybrids. These differences are quite understandable, but there are important reasons for the current increase in the frequency of splitting.

Species numbers

To put the increased splitting in perspective, it is worth looking at recent trends in the number of known species of birds in the world. Through to the early part of the present century, a great deal of field ornithology was done along the barrel of a gun. Species were described on the basis of museum skins, divorced from the biology of the living bird. Until the early 1800s, the number of bird species recognised by science was very low (fig. 1). Numbers rose rapidly during the main period of exploration and imperial colonialism in the 1800s, as travellers and collectors sent millions of bird specimens home to the great European museums.

There was little knowledge of geographic variation, and species were defined 'typologically' (i.e. individuals of each species were considered to be replicas of each other). Increasingly, however, it was realised that many of the forms which had originally been described as separate species were in fact only geographic representatives (later formalised as subspecies) of species found elsewhere. The idea of subspecies grew particularly vigorously in North America. It was advocated in Britain by Henry Seebohm and Ernst Hartert,

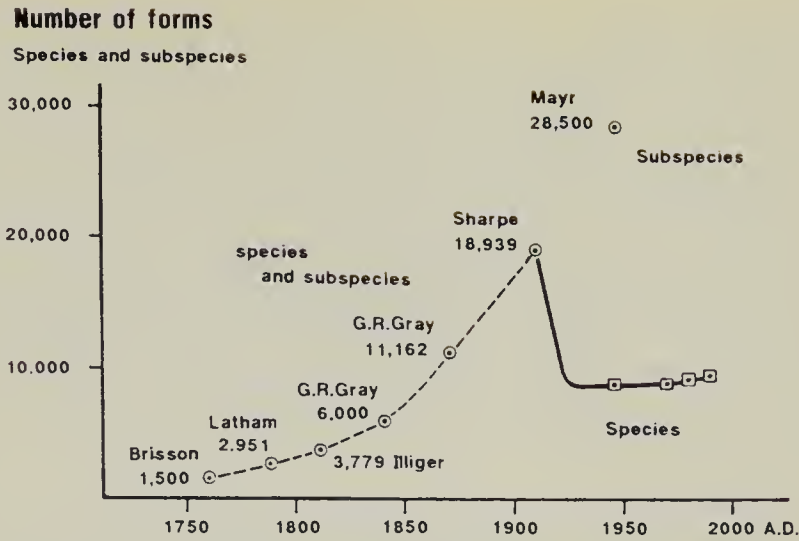


Fig. 1. Number of known species of birds over the last 250 years. For recent counts, see Knox (1991). From Haffer (1992), reproduced with the permission of the British Ornithologists' Club

against the ornithological establishment as personified by Richard Bowdler Sharpe at the British Museum. Sharpe's list of birds of the world included nearly 19,000 separate 'species' by the time it was completed in 1909 (Sharpe 1899-1909). Through the influence of Hartert in particular, the application of the subspecies concept led to the grouping of many former 'species' into wider biological species, each with several subspecies. The number of recognised species tumbled to about 8,000 (Haffer 1992).

Since then, species numbers have risen gradually, for three main reasons. First, there has been the discovery of a slow but steady stream of completely new species, particularly from South America (see e.g. Vuilleumier *et al.* 1992). Secondly, as ornithology has matured, detailed studies of geographic variation, of biology and behaviour and, especially, of vocalisations have shown that several of the typological 'species' which had been lumped into the new, wide-ranging species had been good species all along. Finally, these newer studies have also led to species splits which were previously unsuspected.

This type of detailed research is more prevalent in North America than in Europe. Since 1985, 20 species have been added to the AOU list simply because of splitting, and none removed through lumping (AOU 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991). Relevant studies included those on:

- (1) **Western Grebe**, split into two species (see above) based mainly on detailed field studies (accepted by the AOU in 1985).
- (2) **Western Flycatcher**, split into two (or three) species (see above) based mainly on biochemical and field studies (Johnson & Marten 1988).
- (3) **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus*, split into two species (both of which have apparently occurred in Britain) based on museum, field and biochemical studies (Ouellet 1993, not yet accepted by the AOU). This split is currently being examined by the BOURC.
- (4) **Black-tailed Gnatcatcher** *Poliophtila melanura*, split into two (or three) species based mainly on detailed field studies (Atwood 1988).
- (5) **Brown Towhee** *Pipilo fuscus*, split into two species based on biochemical and museum studies (Zink 1988).
- (6) **Fox Sparrow** *Passerella iliaca*, split into at least three species based mainly on a detailed museum study (Zink 1986, not yet accepted by the AOU).

Biochemical taxonomy

There is a popular misconception that biochemical taxonomy, using DNA or protein, will soon solve all the problems in taxonomy. This is a little premature, as biochemical taxonomy still has its limitations. At the higher taxonomic levels, DNA hybridisation and other techniques have offered some interesting insights (Sibley & Ahlquist 1990; Sibley & Monroe 1990), although there are sufficient reservations about the hybridisation methodology and interpretation to prevent the widespread adoption of the proposed new sequence without a lot of further research (see reviews by Inskipp 1991, Knox 1991, Kraejewski 1991, Lanyon 1992, O'Hara 1991, Parkes 1992, Parkin 1991, Peterson & Stotz 1992, Raikow 1991, Siegel-Causey 1992, Storer 1992 and Westneat 1992).

In common with most other taxonomic information, biochemical data often require careful interpretation. There is no simple readout that says 'These are species' and 'These are just subspecies.' As with external appearance, there can be large, or small, differences in the DNA or proteins of closely related species or subspecies.

a) The mitochondrial DNAs of Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Short-billed Dowitcher *L. griseus* are as different as is usually seen between very well-marked species (Avisé & Zink 1988). Most birders would agree that the two species are fairly similar in appearance, and similar DNA might have been expected.

b) McConnell's Flycatcher *Mionectes macconnelli* and Ochre-bellied Flycatcher *M. oleagineus* of Central and South America are also very similar in appearance. Even multivariate statistical analysis of several morphological characters fails correctly to assign all individuals. Electrophoresis shows, however, that the differences in the proteins between these species are as great as those between other congeneric species (Capparella & Lanyon 1985).

c) Conversely, several studies have shown that there are very few differences in the proteins of the large gulls, even between Great Black-backed *Larus marinus*, Glaucous *L. hyperboreus*, Lesser Black-backed *L. fuscus* and Herring *L. argentatus* (e.g. Rytman *et al.* 1980; Johnson 1985; Snell 1991).

d) In a recent study of DNA from two species of white-eyes *Zosterops* in Australia, one DNA type was found to extend across the ranges of four races of one species. One of these races was found to be divided into two different DNA types and the difference between these DNA types was as great as the DNA differences seen between some good species. The DNA of one population of the second species was also found to be closer to the DNA of the first species than it was to DNA from other populations of its own species, possibly as a result of limited interspecific hybridisation (Degnan & Moritz 1992).

Together, these examples hint at how much is being learned and how much is still to be discovered about the relationship between external appearance, upon which existing subspecies (and species) are based, and DNA. The latter is often regarded as the better measure of evolutionary affinity. Each of these detailed DNA studies, however, sampled only a tiny fraction of the genome, and other parts may tell a different story (e.g. Fletcher & Moore 1992). It seems clear that large changes in appearance may be accompanied by minimal change at the DNA level, and vice versa.

Even so, DNA analysis has established that the 'Tyne Petrels' are in fact Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* and that Swinhoe's should be treated as a separate species from Leach's Storm-petrel *O. leucorhoa* (Dawson 1992, & in prep.), justifying an otherwise questionable split. Biochemical taxonomy is immensely useful, but is perhaps weakest with the question 'Is it a species?'.

Britain and the Western Palearctic

There has been less recent splitting in the Western Palearctic than in North America or some other parts of the world. This is partly because the avifauna of the Western Palearctic has been better known for longer than the avifaunas of most other continents. Also, the shape and glacial history of Europe may not have presented the same opportunities for the evolution of very closely related species pairs or complexes. Perhaps of greater importance, however, is the lack of taxonomists working today on these problems within Europe.

Despite this lack of professional involvement, the taxonomy of the Western Palearctic list has not been frozen since Voous (1977), and several changes to the British List have been made by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee:

(a) Water Pipit was split into three species: Water, Rock and Buff-bellied Pipits. The splitting of Water and Buff-bellied Pipits was based on field studies in the former USSR which showed that the forms were nesting close together without interbreeding. The separation of Rock Pipit was in part consequential to that split (Nazarenko 1978; BOU 1986; Alström & Mild 1987; Shirihai & Colston 1987; Knox 1988).

(b) Connors (1983) showed that American and Pacific Golden Plovers were not interbreeding to any significant extent in Alaska. The BOU accepted this split in 1986, although it has not yet been adopted by the American Ornithologists' Union (BOU 1986; Knox 1987). Recently, further evidence of the differences between the forms has come to light (Connors *et al.* 1993).

(c) Bourne (1983) recommended that the group formerly known as the Soft-plumaged Petrel should be split into three species: *Pterodroma mollis*, *P. madeira* and *P. feae*, on the basis of general appearance and biology (see also Zino & Zino 1986; BOU 1992).

(d) Similarly, Bourne *et al.* (1988) and Yésou *et al.* (1990) recommended the splitting of Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* and Mediterranean Shearwater *P. yelkouan* (the latter including *P. y. mauretanicus*) on the basis of general appearance and biology (BOU 1991).

The editors of *British Birds* recently adopted a number of other splits of Western Palearctic species (*Brit. Birds* 86: 1-2). Several of these do not relate to forms for which there are accepted British or Irish records. The BOURC has therefore not commented upon them. The adoption of taxonomic changes by this journal without justifying them at the time is regrettable*. A statement that the decisions were 'guided by the current trends in the literature' (*Brit. Birds* 86: 2) is a poor substitute for proper discussion and adequate references. It is a throwback to earlier decades when confusion and instability arose from unexplained, and sometimes seemingly arbitrary, taxonomic decisions by editors and authors.

In particular, the splitting of Herring Gull into three species without a full discussion is likely to lead only to confusion. Certainly, Herring Gull and Yellow-legged Gull *L. a. michahellis* [or *L. cachinnans*: EDS] now behave as separate species in western Europe, but no information is given by the Editors about how they believe other forms currently placed with the Herring Gull should be treated. The splitting of Armenian Gull *L. a. armenicus* [as *L.*

*Dr Alan Knox is entitled to his opinion and very well qualified to express it. We do not, however, accept that our actions were 'regrettable', since they have attracted attention to the problems involved, have prompted useful discussions in print (e.g. Chylarecki 1993; Filchagov 1993; Chandler & Wilds 1994; Yésou *et al.* 1994) and have helped to promote further studies. EDS

amoenus: EDS] is controversial and may not be justifiable on present evidence (see, e.g., Filchagov 1993). These actions have already been criticised by Chylarecki (1993). Splitting of Yellow-legged Gull may temporarily satisfy western European birders, but it only pushes the problem somewhere else rather than resolving it. These are not untenable taxonomic decisions, but their adoption should have been accompanied by a discussion of the problems and should have recommended a particular treatment of '*omissus*', *heuglini*, *barabensis* and several other relevant forms. This information would have helped readers to understand the decisions and the reasoning behind them. It is not good practice to revise in isolation the taxonomy of only part of a group such as this.

Birds to watch?

The BOURC closely monitors taxonomic changes and information that may be relevant to birds on the British List. Amongst the problems currently being investigated, the following are some of the more interesting:

- a. Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* and Tundra Swan *C. columbianus columbianus*. Although there is some hybridisation between these forms where they come into contact on the breeding grounds, it may turn out to be relatively unimportant and separate specific status may be justified.
- b. Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull and Yellow-legged Gull (see above). Several groups and individual researchers are actively studying critical parts of the Herring Gull complex. Although Herring Gull and Yellow-legged Gull behave as species in western Europe, revision of the group at this time would be premature, given the rate at which new information is emerging.
- c. Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* and Least Tern *S. albifrons antillarum*. If any of the claimed British records of Least Tern are accepted, the BOURC would give serious consideration to treating Least Tern as a separate species [as it already is by *British Birds*: EDS].
- d. Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava flava* and Yellow Wagtail *M. flava flavissima*. These forms have nested for some time in close proximity in northern France and the Netherlands, apparently without significant hybridisation. They also both nest in southern Scandinavia, where the position is less clear. Any suggestion to treat the Yellow Wagtail as a separate species would need to consider the affinities of other races, such as *M. f. lutea*.

Armchair ticking

There is sometimes pressure from birders for species to be split, motivated mainly by the desire for a quick tick. It is, however, important to remember that, biologically, it should not matter what populations are called. Whether they are treated taxonomically as species or subspecies should make no difference. What matters is to realise the biological, and conservation, importance of separate genetic lineages, whatever they are called. There is a need to impress this upon conservation and political agencies.

The British List

For some years now, the taxonomy and sequence of the British List maintained by the BOU Records Committee has generally followed that of Voous (1977), unless there were published justifications for doing otherwise. This has helped to preserve a degree of stability for over two decades. The Committee examines carefully the evidence for possible changes to species-level (and other) taxonomy before coming to decisions. As a matter of policy, it generally does not institute changes based on preliminary results or unpublished evidence (BOU 1993).

The Phylogenetic Species Concept

The discussions in this article are based on the Biological Species Concept definition of species. This has been in use for half a century and is still widely applied. As we have seen, however, the BSC has practical disadvantages, particularly in determining the status of geographically isolated populations (e.g. Little and Least Terns). One way around this is to adopt a different way of delimiting species. The Phylogenetic Species Concept (PSC) would define as a species any population of birds showing its own heritable characteristics. If an isolated population had evolved at least one inherited characteristic that was different from all those of other populations, then it would be treated as a separate species. The existence of the different characteristics would be taken as evidence that the populations had maintained independent evolutionary histories for long enough for the differences to have evolved. If their evolutionary histories had not been independent, the populations would not differ.

The implications of the PSC would be that many forms that are today regarded as subspecies would be treated as full species. The species count for the world might well double with the widespread adoption of the PSC.

The PSC has been applied in several recent studies of North American birds and has influenced decisions to treat some forms as separate species. The concept is, however, not without its critics, and it will no doubt be debated further before widespread adoption is likely. Even then, detailed phylogenetic analyses will need to be undertaken of many existing species to determine if the basal units of evolution are the existing biological species or not. For a more detailed discussion of the PSC, readers are referred to McKittrick & Zink (1988).

Acknowledgments

This paper is based largely on a talk I gave at the BTO/'Birding World' conference at Swanwick in March 1993. I should like to thank Dr David Parkin and Dr David Snow for comments on the manuscript.

Summary

Species are sometimes taxonomically lumped (when two or more species are grouped together and called just one), or split (when one species is divided into two or more). A recent example of lumping was the grouping together of Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Two-barred Warbler *P. t. plumbeitarsus* and Green Warbler *P. t. nitidus*. Splitting occurred when Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* was separated into Pacific Golden Plover *P. fulva* and American Golden Plover *P. dominica*.

Difficulties in deciding when geographically isolated populations should be treated as species or subspecies are discussed. Just because birds look different, this does not mean that they belong to separate species; conversely, birds that look quite similar may be specifically distinct. One of the problems is that there is not necessarily a direct correlation between differences in appearance and differences at the genetic level (DNA). There may also be big or small genetic differences between separate species or within individual subspecies.

Splitting is on the increase for several reasons, and examples are described. Despite pressure from birders for species to be split, it is important to remember that, biologically, it should not matter what populations are called. Whether they are treated taxonomically as species or as subspecies should make no difference. What matters is the biological, and conservation, importance of separate genetic lineages, whatever they are called.

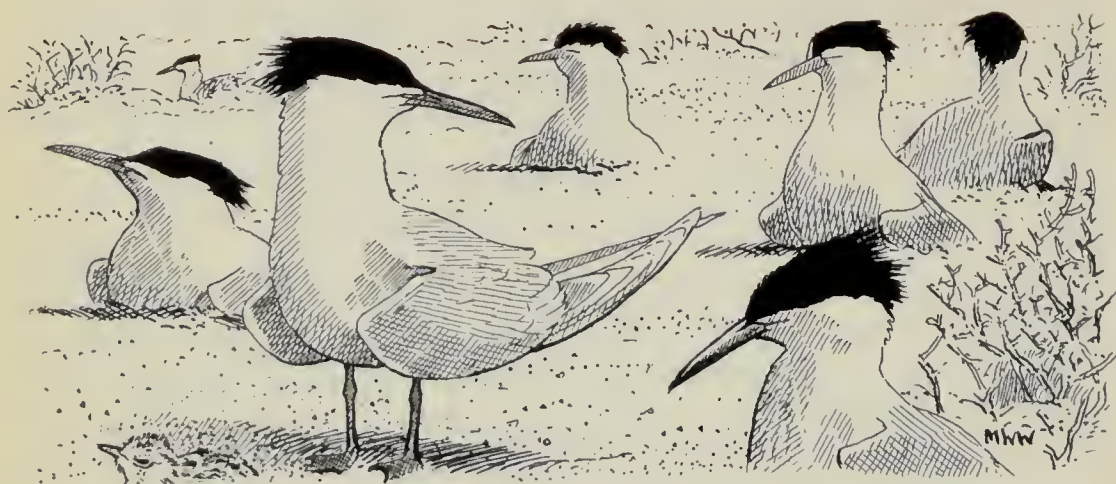
There is an ongoing debate about how species should be defined.

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Rediscovery of Lesser Crested Terns breeding in Libya

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In the early 1930s, the Italian hydrobiologist Giorgio Bini and his team made four visits in two successive years to an island in the Gulf of Sirte along the coast of Libya (fig. 1). In July, they found eggs ('possible to be eaten') and, in August, chicks of a tern, originally identified as Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (Bini 1935). The Italian ornithologist Edgardo Moltoni managed to visit this island again, on 21st August 1937, and found a large colony of Lesser Crested Terns *S. bengalensis* (Moltoni 1938). His estimate of the size of the colony was 'more than 2,000 birds' (including adults and chicks, varying in age from 'just hatched to ready to fly in a week or two'). This would remain the only available information on the species' breeding in Libya for more than half a century. Apparently, no serious attempts have been made to visit this colony in later years (e.g. Bundy 1976).

In other parts of the Mediterranean region, breeding by Lesser Crested Terns has been noted only occasionally in various countries (Brichetti & Foschi 1987; see discussion).

Considerable numbers of migrant Lesser Crested Terns have been observed in spring and autumn, in recent years, along the coasts of Morocco (Brosset 1956; Heim de Balsac & Mayaud 1962; Smith 1965; Pineau & Giraud-Audine 1974, 1975), Algeria (Schmitt 1963; Jacob 1983), Tunisia (Thomsen & Jacobsen 1979) and Libya (Bundy & Morgan 1969), suggesting that the Mediterranean breeding population was wintering somewhere in West Africa. The actual wintering areas were unknown until recently (Cramp 1985). Since

1973, up to 28 have been reported annually between late August and April in the Gambia (Batten 1975; Nielsen 1975; Gore 1990). From Senegal, where the species was first noted in 1974, there are a few winter records (Meininger 1988). In winter 1986/87, an important wintering area was discovered along the coast of Guinea-Bissau: 400 were counted and at least 1,000 were estimated to be present (Wymenga & Altenburg 1992). This suggests that, with the coastal wetlands in neighbouring Guinea, for which Altenburg & van der Kamp (1991) mentioned 100-150 wintering individuals, Guinea-Bissau is the main wintering area for the Mediterranean breeding population. Records farther south concern very small numbers observed in Ghana (Grimes 1987) and Nigeria (Brichetti & Fosehi 1987).

The apparent absence of large colonies elsewhere in the Mediterranean, the migrants seen in Northwest Africa, the numbers found wintering in West Africa, and the observations of Baker (1984), who observed considerable numbers displaying near Benghazi (Libya), suggested that Lesser Crested Terns were still breeding in Libya. Inspired and challenged by these facts, we visited the coast of Libya during 19th-28th July 1993, checking several potential breeding sites. This was a joint project of the Foundation Working Group International Wader and Waterfowl Research (WIWO), the Netherlands, and the Marine Biology Research Centre, University of Al-Fateh at Tajura, Libya.

Results of 1993 survey

There are just a few potential breeding sites for Lesser Crested Tern along the coast of Libya. Along the mainland, there are several coastal lagoons and many extensive saltmarshes. The presence, however, of large numbers of foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, jackals *Canis aureus* and dogs makes the establishment of a colony of Lesser Crested Terns unlikely. The level of predation is illustrated by the fact that nearly all nests of loggerhead turtles *Caretta caretta* found along sandy beaches next to such areas had been destroyed by predators. Except for scattered colonies of Little Terns *S. albigrons*, we did not find any breeding colonial waterbirds on the mainland. Most of the few islands shown on maps are just wave-washed rocks and therefore unsuitable for breeding terns. The few potentially suitable islands are all in eastern Libya. A visit to two of these in July 1993 resulted in the discovery of two Lesser Crested Tern breeding colonies.

Geziret al Elba (plates 46-49)

Located near Ayn al Ghazalah (32°13' N, 23°18' E; alternative names Geziret [= island] Ayn al Ghazalah, Geziret Maraheeb), this site is situated in the Gulf of Bumbah (Ghaliz al Bumbah, Gulf of Bomba), 2 km from the coast in the mouth of Ayn Al Ghazalah Bay. It is a low island, with a maximum length of 2.5 km and a width of up to 1 km. The northern, more rocky part is the highest (1.5 m above sea level), gradually sloping into a saltmarsh at sea level on the southern part. Vegetation is dominated by thinly distributed glasswort *Salicornia fruticosa* and sea-purslane *Halimione portulacoides*. Most of the shore is covered by dense mats of accumulated seaweed *Poseidonia* washed ashore.

During a first visit on 25th June 1993 by DAH and MFAE, a colony of 36 nests of Lesser Crested Terns was found: 34 nests with one egg and two with two eggs. During a second visit by the authors on 21st July, this colony held



Fig. 1. Location of sites mentioned in text

40 nests, of which only 13 contained a single egg. Three, apparently new, nests were situated in a small subcolony, about 10 m from the main colony, which occupied an area of only a few square metres. All other nests contained small chicks or had chicks nearby. The age of the chicks (of which 25 were ringed) varied between two and ten days, most being about five days old. The colony appeared in a healthy state, with no signs of predation, chicks in good condition, and no dead birds found. It occupied a small, slightly elevated, sandy part of the saltmarsh covering the southern part of the island. The shortest distance from the colony to the sea was about 150 m. There was another, similar raised site about 100 m from the colony, which had clearly been used as a nesting site by the terns in a previous year, as shown by the presence of old nest scrapes and accumulated guano.

There were only a few other breeding birds on the island. On 25th June, about ten breeding pairs of Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans* were present. Three chicks were found, varying in age between one and two weeks. On 21st July, no signs of breeding Yellow-legged Gulls were observed, but about 25 pairs of Little Terns were seen, most with fledged young, but also some still feeding flightless chicks on the ground. In addition, there were a few breeding pairs of Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* and at least ten Crested Larks *Galerida cristata*. Although Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* were present on the island (seven adults and eight juveniles), we could not find any trace of them breeding.

Geziret Garah (plates 50 & 51)

This site (30°48' N, 19°54' E; alternative names Legarah Island, Geziret Legarah, Geziret al Boheri) is the famous 'Bird Island' ('Isola degli Uccelli') visited by Moltoni in 1937. It is situated in the Gulf of Sirte (Surt, Sudra), approximately 20 km WSW of Zuwaytinah, about 12 km from the shore. It is a small (300 × 150 m) sandstone island, which rises to about 8 m above sea level. Owing to wave erosion, the edges on the northern, western and eastern sides are mainly sandstone cliffs. The southern side is more sheltered, and

therefore more gradually sloping, with small sandy parts. The island is sparsely vegetated with low scattered bushes.

During a visit by DAH and MFAE on 24th June 1993, not a single Lesser Crested Tern was present on Geziret Garah, and no eggs were found. The only Lesser Crested Terns observed were a flock of 75 adults perched on a nearby rock. Prior to our next visit to the island, on 27th July 1993, we had observed hundreds of adult Lesser Crested Terns along the coast near the Zuwaytinah oil complex, both fishing and resting on rocks or oil pipes. When we approached the island by boat in the early morning of 27th July, a steady stream of Lesser Crested Terns coming from the island and flying in a northerly direction was the first indication of the presence of a breeding colony. Shortly after landing on the island, we located a considerable breeding colony. This was found on a relatively flat and sandy area of about 20×7 m, with only a few bushes, on the northwestern edge of the island. The unlined nest scrapes were often very close to each other, sometimes as little as 10 cm apart. A total of 1,450 apparently occupied nests was counted: 1,262 with one egg (87.3%), 184 with two eggs (12.7%), the rest with small chicks. In addition, some 300 eggs, mostly found in groups of four to eight, could not be attributed to a nest. Over 200 of these were found near the cliff edge and appeared have been washed out of the nest by high waves during recent strong winds. The other 'loose' eggs, mostly on the landward side of the colony, appeared to have been removed by predators, most likely by Yellow-legged Gulls. Assuming that the 1,450 nests did not include replacement clutches, and that the clutch-size proportions were the same for the 300 'loose' eggs as for the occupied nests, a local breeding population of about 1,700 pairs was calculated. Only one out of ten one- to three-day-old chicks was still alive. At least ten nests contained a hatching egg. Based on an incubation period of 21-26 days (K. Hulsman in Cramp 1985), eggs must have been laid around 1st July, just a week after the first visit to the island on 24th June.

The only other species found breeding on Geziret Garah was Yellow-legged Gull. Although the gull colony had been deserted by 27th July, we found 30 recently used nests and five dead, not yet fully fledged chicks. A striking feature of the island was the presence of enormous quantities of bird bones all over. There is little doubt that most or all of these were bones of domestic chickens *Gallus gallus* and turkeys *Meleagris gallopavo*, picked up by Yellow-legged Gulls at the rubbish tip of the nearby oil complex. Although one adult and three juvenile Shags were seen, local breeding seems unlikely, since no old nests were found.

Food

Although Ayn al Ghazalah Bay was teeming with small fish on 21st July, not a single Lesser Crested Tern was seen fishing there. All terns observed leaving the colony at Geziret al Elba were heading out to sea in a northerly direction and none was seen fishing near the island. An 8.5-cm-long fish regurgitated by a chick was a bogue *Boops boops*. Discarded fish found in this colony were a garfish *Belone belone* (6 cm), a sand-cel *Gymnammodytes cicerellus* (8 cm) and a probable grey mullet (Mugilidae) (3 cm).



46. Adult Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*, Geziret al Elba, Ayn al Ghazalah, Libya, 21st July 1993
(Peter L. Meininger)



47 & 48. Above, Lesser Crested Terns *Sterna bengalensis*, Geziret al Elba, Ayn al Ghazalah, Libya, 21st July 1993, above, adults with nestlings; below, nests with eggs and nestlings (Peter L. Meininger)





449. Nestling Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*, Geziret al Elba, Ayn al Ghazalah, Libya, 21st July 1993
(Peter L. Meininger)



50 & 51. Above and below, breeding colony of Lesser Crested Terns *Sterna bengalensis*, Geziret Garah, Zuwaytinah, Libya, 27th July 1993 (Peter L. Meininger)



Lesser Crested Terns from Geziret Garah were seen flying in northerly directions, with some flocks feeding close to the colony, but also many passing Zuwaytinah, suggesting feeding areas at considerable distances from the colony. Relatively fresh fish found in the colony at Geziret Garah on 27th July were identified as anchovy *Engraulis encrasicolus* (length range 5.0-9.5 cm, $n = 13$), sardine *Sardinella aurita* (one of 9 cm, three of 12 cm) and picarel *Spicara* (one of 12 cm).

It should be noted that fish found in the colonies does not necessarily represent food of chicks, but may also involve food discarded by chicks (e.g. because it is too large) or fish used by displaying adults. It does, however, provide some clue to the type of fish on which the terns probably feed. Both anchovy and sardine are semi-pelagic schooling fish.

Predation and other threats

Predation

No sign of predation was seen in the Lesser Crested Tern colony on Geziret al Elba. After we completed our work in this colony, most adults quickly returned to their nests. After five minutes, two first-summer Yellow-legged Gulls approached the colony, flying at 15-20 m. The terns responded by flying towards the approaching gulls, calling loudly and vigorously mobbing them. One gull was successfully chased off by five terns and was escorted to a distance of about 300 m from the colony. The other gull was not so easily put off, and continued to fly towards the colony. When it almost overflowed the colony, the adult terns responded by immediately settling on their eggs or chicks, and looking straight up. No alarm calls were heard during the passing of the gull. No attempts at predation were made by either of the gulls.

On Geziret Garah, 86 eggs apparently removed by predators were found on the land side of the colony. The most likely candidate for this predation is Yellow-legged Gull, which breeds on the island earlier in the season. It seems unlikely, however, that the breeding success in the colony is seriously influenced by gull predation.

Oil

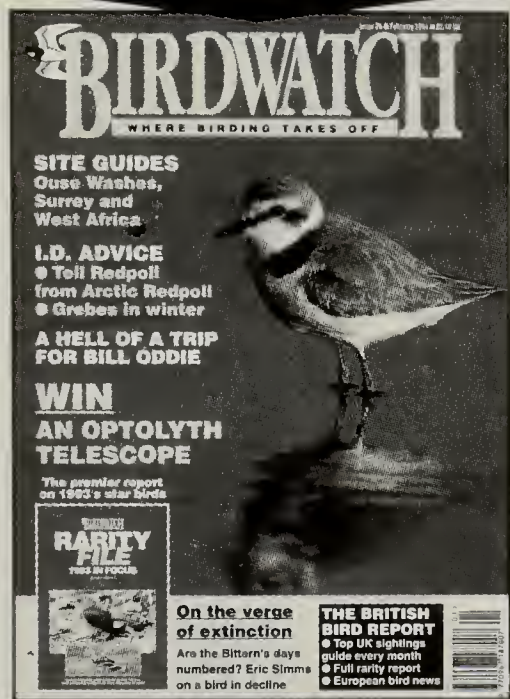
No oiled birds were seen on Geziret al Elba. Geziret Garah is within sight of a large oil plant where large quantities of oil are pumped on board tankers almost daily. The local beach is quite heavily polluted with oil. We were, therefore, surprised that only ten out of 600 birds checked (in the field and on photographs) had some oil on the plumage.

Disturbance

The two Lesser Crested Tern colonies found do not seem to suffer from human disturbance: there are no major cities or villages on the coast close to the islands and there is no evidence of recreation on them. Geziret al Elba is sometimes visited by fishermen who come there to clean and repair their nets. According to employees of the oil plant at Zuwaytinah, Geziret Garah is used only occasionally by fishermen, as a shelter during rough weather. None of the employees had ever been to the island.

When we approached the colony on Geziret al Elba, the adults that were in

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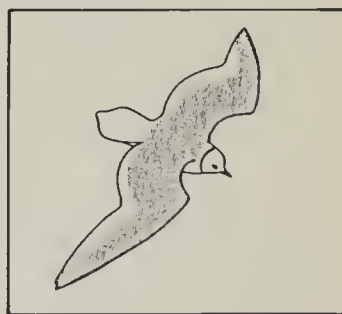
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the colony quickly flew to us and were calling loudly in a loose group high above us. After we came within 150 m of the colony, they started to feign attacks close overhead, but never came lower than 1 m above us.

The terns on Geziret Garah were much less aggressive. When we approached the island by launch, all adults flew away from the colony in a long, serpentine-like flock. This flock continued to circle the island until we had left. The terns did not settle until we had left the island, after a stay of about one hour. Even after we had returned to the tug, which was about 1 km from the island, the terns settled for only short periods.

Discussion

It cannot be completely excluded that there are more breeding sites of the Lesser Crested Tern along the Libyan coast, other than the two islands where colonies were found in 1993. According to local fishermen, there are 'many' birds breeding on Geziret al Bardaa (about 32°10' N, 23°25' E), a quite large rocky island in the Gulf of Bumbah. Based on their descriptions, these are mostly Shags and Yellow-legged Gulls. Attempts to visit Geziret al Bardaa in July 1993 failed, owing to strong winds and high waves. It cannot be excluded that some Lesser Crested Terns breed on Geziret al Bardaa, situated only 15 km from Geziret al Elba, where 40 pairs were found in 1993. At least five hours of seawatching on 21st and 23rd July, however, along the coast opposite Geziret al Bardaa, did not produce a single Lesser Crested Tern. This makes the presence of a sizeable colony in this region quite unlikely.

In 1978, Baker (1984) made regular counts of a roost of Lesser Crested Terns on a saltmarsh at Benghazi. He observed the species on 31 days between 26th May and 5th November, with display and mating seen regularly in June, and a maximum of 328 terns on 1st July. He did not mention observations between 7th July and 29th August, after which date small numbers of Lesser Crested Terns were observed again. Although it is not fully clear if the lack of records is due to the absence of the observer, it may be that the terns used the Benghazi area only as a pre-breeding site, and moved to Geziret Garah (about 110 km to the south) to lay in early July. This would agree with relatively small numbers present near this island on 24th June 1993. The 25 adults observed by us near Benghazi on 25th July 1993 could, on the other hand, have been failed breeders from Geziret Garah.

Although displaying Lesser Crested Terns have been observed with some frequency along the coast of Tunisia in late spring, there is no evidence for breeding in that country. Payn (1948) observed small numbers of 'demonstrative' individuals in June 1943 at Lac de Tunis, but was unable to find nests. As already suggested by Isenmann (1972), these birds should be regarded as (displaying) migrants. The citation by Brichetti & Foschi (1987) of Heim de Balsac & Mayaud (1962) that 'there were significant breeding sightings in Tunisia in the first half of this century' is erroneous. The latter authors mentioned only the Payn records and stated 'La nidification de l'espèce est à rechercher dans le Golfe de Gabès.' Smart (1984) stated that nesting had never been proved in Tunisia, though seemed very likely in the Gulf of Gabès. Between 12th and 25th May 1990, up to 71 Lesser Crested Terns were observed at Geziret Bsillia (Kneiss Island; 34°10' N, 10°10' E) in

the Gulf of Gabès, where 'the possibility of breeding should not be excluded' (Spiekman & Keijl 1993). On 2nd August 1993, PLM and PAW paid an extensive visit to this island, but saw not a single Lesser Crested Tern.

Occasionally, displaying and breeding Lesser Crested Terns, generally in colonies of Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis*, have been noted in various other parts of the Mediterranean. On Geziret Nakl (= Nakl Island, Île du Palmier), 4 km off Tripoli in Lebanon, two nests were found on 20th June 1895 (Stenhouse 1904). Hollom (1959) visited this island on 9th May 1956, and found only a colony of Yellow-legged Gulls (although the date of this visit was too early for breeding Lesser Crested Terns). There are no known more-recent records from Lebanon (Benson 1970, in Sultana 1993). In Camargue, France, a displaying Lesser Crested Tern was seen in a colony of Sandwich Terns on 9th August 1971 (Isenmann 1972). In the Evros Delta, Greece, a Lesser Crested Tern attending a nest, and possibly forming a mixed pair with a Sandwich Tern, was found on 11th-13th June 1987 (Goutner 1988). In Italy, a single pair bred in a colony of Sandwich Terns in Valli di Comacchio annually during 1985-93 (Brichetti & Foschi 1987, 1988, 1990, and *in litt.*). In 1990, in addition to the usual pair, a third individual was paired with a Sandwich Tern (Brichetti & Foschi 1990). In the Ebro Delta, Spain, there were single pairs in 1979 and 1981, and two pairs in 1984 (Ferrer & Martínez-Vilalta 1986).

During 1984-93, a female Lesser Crested Tern frequented a Sandwich Tern colony on the Farne Islands, Northumberland, in most years, rearing hybrid young at least twice, in 1989 and 1992 (Rogers *et al.* 1986-93). A bird present at the Banc d'Arguin on the Atlantic coast of France between 1974 and 1984 was originally identified as a Lesser Crested Tern (Campredon 1976; Petit 1976; *Brit. Birds* 76: 568; 77: 589). The identification of this bird was, however, questioned by Grant (1984), and later it proved to be an Elegant Tern *S. elegans* (*Brit. Birds* 83: 13).

Conclusions

The survey in 1993 showed that the Libyan coast still holds breeding Lesser Crested Terns. There appear to be no serious threats to the two colonies found, holding 40 and 1,700 pairs respectively. The population seems, however, vulnerable, since it is small and is confined to just a few traditional breeding sites. It is impossible to say if there has been a change in numbers compared with the situation in 1937.

Acknowledgments

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Summary

In July 1993, two breeding colonies of Lesser Crested Terns *Sterna bengalensis* were located along the coast of Libya: one of 40 pairs at Geziret al Elba, north of Ayn al Ghazalah (32°13' N, 23°18' E), and one of 1,700 pairs at Geziret Garah, southwest of Zuwaytinah (30°48' N, 19°54' E). These two islands are the only currently known regular breeding sites in the Mediterranean region. Some data are presented on breeding biology, habitat, food, and threats, collected during visits (the first since 1937!) to these breeding colonies.

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- Hippolais* warblers: see page 21 in January issue
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The 'British Birds' Best Annual Bird Report Award



Enthusiastic entrants for the Best Bird Report competition presented 33 reports which Robert Gillmor, Rob Hume, Mike Rogers and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock perused with equal enjoyment for the best part of a day. All four judges are or have been involved in local bird clubs and three in editing reports. Mike Rogers represented the Association of County Recorders and Editors (ACRE), of which he was the instigator; he deals with county recorders (as Secretary of the British Birds Rarities Committee) more than anyone. It was, therefore, an interested, experienced and critical panel that set to work.

Although not new, it needs repeating that an examination of so many reports reinforces the understanding that so many people put such time, effort and expertise into local bird reports that every one of them deserves an award. The standard this year was exceptional, and it was a pleasure to find that so many editors have 'raised their game', owing in part, we hope, to this new competition. Indeed, one editor noted that various improvements had been made in his county report as a result of comments made by the judges last year, but 'We do not expect this will have improved our position in the rankings this year, as obviously one of the outcomes of the competition is the general raising of standards of bird reports all-round. We have to improve just to stay still!'. That, of course, is the main purpose of offering this Award, so we are delighted to have received this comment (though sympathise with the editor concerned).

A good report must leave a record for posterity, in such a way that a future reader may understand the local bird life and its changing fortunes. It must equally allow a contemporary reader from another county, or country, to be able to grasp the general status of species in the area. Last, but not least, it must please local club members who contribute, wish to see their efforts rewarded, and want an illuminating, educative and enthusiastic record of the past year's birds.

As before, the reports were assessed according to a list of ideal factors that meet these needs. These include the completeness and clarity of the systematic list and a statement of local status for each species; relevant tables and diagrams; the inclusion of decorative and documentary drawings, a county map and migrant arrival and departure dates; sensible treatment of escapes; good layout and design; and so on: in short, a mixture of scientific value and aesthetic appeal. High scores go to species accounts that put occurrences into context, both historical and contemporary, local, regional and even national or international where relevant. Thus, counts of hirundine flocks might reflect increases or decreases, following (or contradicting) recent trends in Britain and Europe, local weather conditions or changes in habitat. A bald statement of date, place and total leaves the reader unaware of any of this. The best

a long list of club secretaries, fund-raisers, printers and others who provide the vital background work upon which the production of a successful bird report relies. The top dozen reports were all of an exceedingly high standard (table 1). Our congratulations to them all.

Table 1. Results

Position	County (with positions in previous years)	Score (out of 47)	%
1	Essex (2nd= 1991)	39¾	85
2	Hertfordshire (12th= 1991)	39½	84
3	London (8th= 1990; 4th 1991)	39	83
4	Cornwall (2nd 1990; 2nd= 1991)	37½	80
5=	Upton Warren (21st 1990)	34	72
5=	Wiltshire (6th= 1991)	34	72
7=	Derbyshire (5th 1990; 6th= 1991)	33½	71
7=	Shetland (4th 1990)	33½	71
9=	Avon (5th 1991)	33	70
9=	Cheshire (8th= 1990; 10th= 1991)	33	70
9=	Sheffield (6th= 1990; 1st 1991)	33	70
12=	Isles of Scilly (22nd 1991)	32½	69
12=	Kent (6th= 1991)	32½	69

Copies of the top four reports can be obtained from the following addresses:

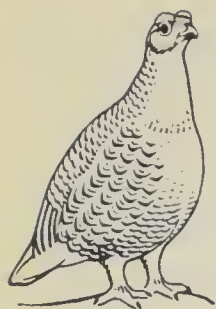
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‘The most striking difference between the day-old chicks of Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus scoticus* and Ptarmigan *L. mutus millaisi* in Scotland is that the down on the legs and feet of the Ptarmigan is longer, conceals the skin more completely and sticks out further on either side of the toes. . . . Chicks of Willow Grouse *L. lagopus albus* and *L. lagopus leucopterus* and of Ptarmigan *L. mutus rupestris* from northern Canada both have heavy down on the legs and feet and cannot be distinguished in this way. The barer legs and feet in the Red Grouse are probably a distinct racial character, like its failure to turn white in winter.’ (*Brit. Birds* 62: 153, April 1969)



Identification pitfalls and assessment problems

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This series, which started in January 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 26-28), is not intended to cover all facets of the identification of the species concerned, but only the major sources of error likely to mislead the observer in the field or the person attempting to assess the written evidence. The species covered are mostly those which were formerly judged by the Rarities Committee*, but which are now the responsibility of county and regional recorders and records committees; other species, both rarer and commoner than those, are also featured sometimes, as in this case.

15. Alpine Swift *Apus melba*

Of 11 species of swift (Apodidae) on the West Palearctic list, only Alpine Swift *Apus melba* possesses a combination of significantly larger size than Common Swift *A. apus* and extensively white underparts. These two features alone, therefore, should be adequate to establish identification, and it is for this reason, no doubt, that many claims of Alpine Swift submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee provide precisely these two features — and nothing more!

During 1981-90, the BBRC accepted a total of 135 Alpine Swifts, with ten or more individuals in six of those years. Unlike the majority of species in this series, therefore, Alpine Swift still meets the criteria for an 'official' rarity (*Brit. Birds* 80: 488) and claims remain subject to adjudication by the BBRC. During this same decade, 19% of claims were rejected: at first sight, a surprisingly high figure for an apparently distinctive species.

Species which appear easy to identify can, however, provide pitfalls, not least of which is a tendency for observers to make snap judgments on the basis of prominent features, while failing to check subtler yet potentially clinching identification criteria. When — as in the case of many records of Alpine Swift — the sighting involves a 'fly-by' (and frequently a single observer), there is no chance for a more disciplined second look. An account which reports 'a swift which was much larger than a Common Swift and which had a prominent white patch on the belly' is diagnostic only if several assumptions are made, and records committees learn from bitter experience *never* to take anything for granted.

Claims (and therefore observations) of Alpine Swift must establish the foundations of the identification as well as the more obvious specific features. First, it must be established that the bird was indeed a species of swift. It is surprising how frequently observers fail to describe basic structural and generic characters. Without these details, however, other families can enter the frame.

*This paper, like those earlier in the series (*Brit. Birds* 76: 26-28, 78-80, 129-130, 203-206, 304-305, 342-345; 77: 412-415; 78: 97-102; 81: 126-134; 84: 145-148; 85: 21-24, 437-439, 191-194, 587-592), is a publication of the Rarities Committee, which is sponsored by Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd.

Distant falcans *Falco*, most frequently the Hobby *F. subbuteo*, have been claimed as Alpine Swifts and, in one even more alarming case, a display-flying Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*. Absolute beginners can also come up with a good Alpine Swift description after watching a Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*.

Secondly, the means by which size was judged must be explicitly stated. Was the larger size than Common Swift gauged in direct comparison with that species, in comparison with another familiar species, or merely as a subjective impression? Judging the size of individual birds can be subject to error, and perhaps no more so than when birds are flying overhead against a featureless sky. Plumage features strongly associated with a particular species can also engender a corresponding size 'impression'. The late Peter Grant put it thus (*Brit. Birds* 73: 228): '... the apparent size of the bird I am watching is only that of the species which I think it is.' An overstatement, perhaps, but with more than a kernel of truth. The principal danger here is the not-infrequent occurrence of partially albinistic Common Swifts; an individual with a white belly, viewed at a distance, would provide a real pitfall for all but the most alert observers.

A well-observed Alpine Swift provides a number of supplementary clues to its identity. The general configuration of sickle-shaped wings, forked tail and blunt, neckless front end, is clearly that of a swift, but, compared with Common Swift, the wing-point is somewhat less attenuated. Additionally, the inner primaries tend to bulge slightly, creating a pinched appearance to the adjoining outer secondaries. In association with its more shallowly forked and broader tail, this produces a relatively robust outline, in keeping with its genuinely larger size. The wingspan of Alpine Swift averages about one-and-a-half times that of Common Swift, while the body-weight ratio is typically $2\frac{1}{2}:1$.

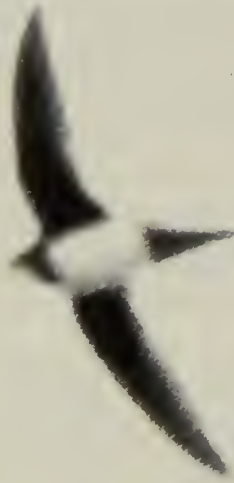
Although not always evident, the upperparts are generally a paler brown than those of Common Swift, frequently with a greyish tinge; the basic hue may recall Sand Martin or the paler plumage components of Pallid Swift *A. pallidus*.

There is, however, a good deal of variation in the colour of the upperparts of Alpine Swift. Three West Palearctic races are recognised, with a further seven races in the Afrotropics, Madagascar and the Indian subcontinent. Darker birds are associated with areas of heavy rainfall, paler birds with semi-desert areas (*BWP* 4: 687). British records involve the nominate race, which breeds in southern Europe, northern Morocco, Asia Minor, and northwest Iran. This race is of intermediate hue, but there is a degree of individual variation, with paler individuals not infrequent and, conversely, a few individuals appearing surprisingly dark.

The underparts display a dark breast-band demarcating a variably distinct whitish throat, which is often not discernible except at close range. The much-vaunted white belly patch should be described with care. It extends from the breast to the rear of the belly, is squarely cut off from the dark vent and undertail-coverts, and confined by the brown flanks. The rear boundary of the white patch falls a little beyond the trailing edge of the wings. Submitted sketches of Alpine Swift not infrequently depict an oval white patch,



52. Alpine Swift *Apus melba*, Barn Elms Reservoirs, Greater London, April 1983 (*BBRC files, photographer not known*). Note dark undertail-coverts, apparent absence of a white throat patch, and slightly less tapered wing-shape than Common Swift *A. apus*



53. Alpine Swift *Apus melba*, Portland Bill, Dorset, August 1986 (*David Tipling*). Note square-cut border between white belly and dark undertail-coverts, and long, pointed appearance when tail closed

encompassing the undertail-coverts. While this may simply be the result of careless observation, it can lead review bodies to question what other aspects of the sketch (and notes) may be inaccurate. The photographs shown here (plates 52-54) have been carefully chosen since they depict Alpine Swifts as they are quite likely to be seen in the field, against a bright sky and through binoculars or telescope.

Alpine Swift has great aerial mastery and flies more powerfully, yet with less apparent effort, than Common Swift. It achieves greater speed with a slower wing action, and lacks the flickering action regularly displayed by Common Swift.

During 1958-92, there were 319 Alpine Swifts in Britain and Ireland, distributed from March to November, with peaks in May and in late September to early October, and the majority of occurrences along the south



54. Alpine Swifts *Apus melba*, Bulgaria, June 1979 (Jan Ševčík)

and east coasts of England. There were signs of an increase in the late 1980s, with about 20 per annum in Britain and Ireland during 1985-88. Since 1989, however, annual totals have declined.

These figures pale, however, compared with a report of a flock of 100 in Kent in July 1915 (*Brit. Birds* 9: 95). It is interesting to speculate upon how comprehensive a description would be required to persuade the current BBRC to accept a comparable claim.

A. R. DEAN

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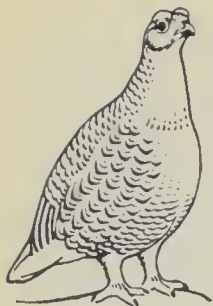
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Reviews

The Private Life of Birds. By **Michael Bright.** Bantam Press, London, 1993. 462 pages; 35 colour plates. ISBN 0593-022319. £20.00.

The author, a senior producer with the BBC Natural History Unit, describes this book as a collection of stories about birds. He has gathered together a remarkable amount of information, usually incorporating the latest research, on virtually every aspect of the life of birds around the world. There are chapters on evolution, flocking, migration, voice, sight, breeding, feeding and relations with humans. This is a book for reading and a book for dipping into. Sadly, it is not quite a book for reference as there is no subject index, though the many chapter sub-headings do help. By dipping, one can read how Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* recognise each other by individual plumage differences, why the alarm call of the male Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* is almost inaudible to potential predators, and discover the location of the world's largest concentration of gulls and what they are doing there. I spotted one or two minor factual errors, but in general this is an excellent compilation which amply demonstrates the wondrous diversity of birds and bird habits the world over.

MALCOLM OGILVIE

Seabirds. By **Rob Hume & Bruce Pearson.** Hamlyn Bird Behaviour Guides, Hamlyn, London, 1993. 160 pages; 46 colour illustrations; 17 black-and-white illustrations. ISBN 0-600-57951-4. £14.99.

Coming to it immediately after returning from a field-trip to Ascension Island studying tropical seabirds, I enjoyed this enthusiastically written little book greatly, learning from it – for example about the differences in the manner of flight and methods of feeding of sea-terns *Sterna*. Dealing chiefly with West Palearctic species, it does (I think) assume that the reader has a certain knowledge of seabirds already, so those who have a general interest in them, seawatchers in particular, should find it a useful introduction to this diverse group and, with the further aid of the 20-page gazetteer, a helpful supplement to the identification guides.

I do have some criticisms. There is no proper discussion of seabird plumage-types and their relationship to feeding methods, especially plunge-diving. This omission leads the author to miss the real significance of why, for instance, the Sandwich Tern *S. sandwicensis* assumes a white forehead again as soon as possible when breeding, thus completing its white frontal aspect for full hunting camouflage (see *Brit. Birds* 65: 464-479, 510-521). Seabird social interactions are dealt with unevenly, there is no attempt to cover breeding strategies, and it is suggested that the aim of each breeding bird is merely to maintain the stability of the population, rather than to maximise its own life-time production of young. The bibliography is scrappy, and the index carelessly compiled. As for the illustrations, I found them adequate but rather disappointing – too garishly reproduced, sometimes gimmicky, sometimes at variance with the text. In spite of these and a few other shortcomings, the book is well worth adding to one's library.

K. E. L. SIMMONS

Birds of Russia. By **Algirdas Knystautas.** HarperCollins, London, 1993. 256 pages; 80 colour plates (over 300 colour photographs); 86 black-and-white photographs/maps/figures. ISBN 000-219913-0. £19.99.

I have to confess to being somewhat disappointed by this book. Despite its misleading title, this long-awaited book covers the entire former USSR, but its intended purpose is unclear. The scope and coverage are inadequate for it to be used as a field guide, yet it is too small for a coffee-table book. It is, however, a useful introduction to the birds of this huge and fascinating region.

There are several introductory chapters describing the geography and avifauna of the region, but the bulk of the text is taken up by the Systematic Review. Although this contains much useful information, entries are typically brief, with negligible identification detail. The text concludes with a full Checklist, which includes a few controversial taxonomic decisions.

A book such as this will, however, be judged mainly by its illustrations, and photographs of many eastern Palearctic species are often hard to come by. There is no doubting the value of photos of species such as the little-known Eversmann's Dove (Yellow-eyed Stock Dove *Columba eversmanni*), but what is the point of including ducks taken at Slimbridge? I would also have preferred fewer photos of birds at the nest. The colour photographs are generally of a high standard and are well reproduced, but why are they so small? Some are smaller than postage stamps! Some birds are in unhelpful poses, and there are a few flocks where the birds are too small to be of any use at all. But why on earth is the magnificent Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus* illustrated only by a chick (was the adult too big for the lens?), and what is the point of including a nestling Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus* (with no mention of its host)? I found few actual errors, but the Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* is surely a Pechora *A. gustavi* (although some of the key features are obscured in the photograph)?

My main criticism is that not enough species are illustrated: only 270 species out of over 800 are featured in colour. Surely, with a better design and layout, more species could have been included, and ideally in a format with facing-page text like most photographic guides? This book is not particularly cheap, and, although it will be bought by many Palearctic aficionados, a more comprehensive collection of photos might have been expected at this price. As it will not be much use in the field, a larger format would also have been appropriate.

NIGEL REDMAN

The Breeding Birds of Hertfordshire. Edited by K. W. Smith, C. W. Dee, J. D. Fearnside, E. W. Fletcher & R. N. Smith. Hertfordshire Natural History Society, Potters Bar, 1993. 316 pages; 110 line-drawings; 255 distribution maps. ISBN 0-9521685-0-2. £22.00.

This marvellous book should serve as a model, act as inspiration and be treasured. The first Hertfordshire tetrad atlas (C. J. Mead & K. W. Smith, 1982, *The Hertfordshire Breeding Bird Atlas*) summarised the seven-year survey carried out during 1967-73; this volume shows the results for the five-year period 1988-92, with the two maps one above the other on the same page, for direct comparison. The three levels of breeding evidence are shown in the standard way, by three sizes of red dot on the black outline of the county and its 10-km squares. The facing page is devoted to text and a line-drawing.

The extent of the changes in a mere 20 years would have astounded ornithologists back in the days when the first survey was carried out. These changes are shown dramatically by the two adjacent distribution maps for each species.

This book does, however, do far more than merely show the two maps. The distributions are analysed according to land use and agricultural practice; there are maps of the distribution of streams, rivers, large bodies of open water, small ponds, built-up areas, golf courses, parkland, and so on and so on. Habitat associations are analysed; and population estimates are made for each species (with detailed explanation of how these were arrived at). Clear, crisp design, good choice of typeface, masses of information, yet no overcrowding and a spacious 'feel', and high-quality production have created a book which should be an example to many other counties or regions.

Comparing the two surveys, the largest changes have been 15-fold increases in distribution of Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* and Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, a more than three-fold increase in Hobby *Falco subbuteo* and a more than doubling of Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* and Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*. At the other end of the scale, Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* and Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* all dropped to less than one-third of the number of tetrads. Ten of the rarer species were lost altogether, but nine were gained (though three of these are introductions). Perhaps of more significance, Northern Shoveler *Anas chipeata*, Gadwall *A. strepera*, Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*, Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Great Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* and Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* all consolidated their position from a very tenuous hold 20 years ago.

From the population estimates, Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* and Blackbird *Turdus merula* emerge as the two most numerous species breeding in Hertfordshire (both with over 50,000 pairs), but the species providing the highest biomass is Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* (36,700 kg), followed

by Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* on 21,000 kg; figures which ought to silence for ever those 'purists' who want to ignore the introduced species which form such a significant part of our avifauna.

An engrossing read; very highly recommended.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Birds, an artist's view. Selected paintings by Terance James Bond. Text by Rob Hume. (Dragon's World, Limsfield and London, 1993. 192 pages. £18.95) Thousands of people, birders or not, will be familiar with the paintings of Terance James Bond, from reproductions on many popular calendars and cards. By them, this well-produced and competitively priced book will be greeted with enthusiasm. It features many full-page colour plates and pencil studies chosen by the artist, accompanied by his own commentary. Rob Hume has contributed lengthier, informative species texts, only occasionally allowing himself short comments on the paintings. It is odd, in 1993, to find text captions referring to 'Crested Titmouse', 'Coal Titmouse' and so on (although these are not used in the texts by Rob Hume).

Terance James Bond's paintings are very strong on composition and clearly carefully considered. They are highly detailed, although innovation is limited, particularly in the treatment of light: unyielding use of black or dark ochre in shadow and the plumage slightly 'hard', with an unhealthy number of unzipped barbules.

ALAN HARRIS

The Birds of CITES and How to Identify Them. By Johannes Erritzoe. Illustrated by Helga Boulet Erritzoe & Johannes Erritzoe. (Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, 1993. 224 pages. ISBN 0-7188-2891-1, hardback £30.00; ISBN 0-7188-2892-5, ringbound £26.00; ISBN 0-7188-2895-X, leatherbound £95.00) The stated aim of this work is 'To enable readers to identify the birds of CITES, only when they are available for protracted close-range inspection. Therefore there is no description of field characters, habits, breeding population, behaviour, food or voice.' Unfortunately, the paintings generally fail to do justice to birds that are often stunningly beautiful in real life, and the short, dry texts (around 100 words of basic plumage description for each species) do not bring them to life.

JTRS

A First Guide to Birdwatching. By Chris Harbard. (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993. 93 pages. ISBN 0-19-910059-4. £9.99) The advice is sound; the large format is attractive (but novices would probably prefer a pocket-sized version); at least one of the three illustrators (who are not listed on the title page, but are identified in tiny type elsewhere) is clearly not a bird-artist—individual paintings are not attributed, but some are awful, and would be of minimal help to a beginner. Surprisingly, accounts of nest, nest-site, eggs and incubation often make up around half of the species-text. Inconsistent and sloppy editing is unexpected with this respected publisher. Bird books for children should be given just as much care and attention as those for critical, expert readers. There are many marvellous bird-artists who could have complemented Chris Harbard's text, and he deserved to have a more-expert or more-meticulous editorial team.

JTRS

Birds of the World. By Colin Harrison & Alan Greensmith. (Dorling Kindersley, London, 1993. 416 pages. ISBN 0-7513-1033-6. Paperback £14.99.) At first glance this looks like a soft-backed field guide to 800 of the world's 9,500 birds. Species are treated in boxes with a text, a distribution map, a photograph and codified information on size, habitat and migratory status. The text is mainly about behaviour and ecology. The photographs have had their backgrounds removed from a computerised image, which has worked surprisingly well in most cases. Cover blurb and introductory material of the kind commonly found at the start of a field guide hint that this is intended as a beginners' field guide. As such, it could only confuse. As a treatment of the variety of birds on earth, however, it is quite attractive and could join several other such books on a collector's shelf.

COLIN J. BIBBY

A Birder's Guide to the Texas Coast. 4th edn. By Harold R. Holt. (American Birding Association, Colorado Springs, 1993. 214 pages. ISBN 1-878788-03-5. Paperback \$14.95) Since the death of the original author,

James A. Lanc, Harold Holt has, very successfully, taken on the task of updating 'Birder's Guides'. The current work includes many more sites than the original, and the access detail and other information is generally meticulous (though, of course, some details can change rapidly, so be prepared to improvise occasionally). It is well laid out and contains plenty of information on planning a trip and on other wildlife as well as birds (and what to avoid, e.g. chiggers). This book leads one down the coast to the Rio Grande Valley, where the equally essential companion guide takes over. With some 130 pages of site detail, it is essential, if time is limited, to decide on hoped-for species when planning an itinerary. Whether undertaking a long tour or just a business trip to Houston, don't leave home without this guide. DAVID HOLMAN

Oiseaux nicheurs de Famenne. L'Atlas de Lesse et Lomme 1985-1989. By Jean-Paul Jacob & Marc Paquay. (Aves, Liège, 1992. 360 pages. Belgian F640) This is a breeding-bird atlas, using 1×1 km squares, covering one of the regions of Wallonia, the southern half of Belgium, the fieldwork carried out by about 80 ornithologists co-ordinated by the Centrale Ornithologique Aves. The period covered is the five years 1985-89, when there were generally harder winters and cooler, damper springs than during the 1970s, when the fieldwork was carried out for the national atlas of Belgium (Devillers *et al.* 1988, *Atlas des Oiseaux Nicheurs de Belgique*). This atlas is partly qualitative (using standard categories of breeding evidence), but also quantitative. Rather than dots or squares of various sizes within the 279 km-squares, classes of abundance from 0 to 5 (0 possible breeding, other five orders of magnitude being 1-5 pairs per km², 6-10, 11-20, 21-40 and more than 41 pairs) are shown by the actual numbers.

Some two dozen well-reproduced colour photographs give an excellent idea of the variety of habitats within this area. Together with considerable analysis of the results in relation to habitat and conservation, these provide far more than 'just' a breeding-bird atlas of a small area. Notable declines since the 1970s include Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, the blue-headed race of the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava flava*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* and Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*. This book demonstrates the great value of co-operative work, even by a relatively small number of observers in a relatively restricted area. It ends with a very helpful two-page summary in English. JTRS

Les Oiseaux de l'île de Parnay sur la Loire. By Victor Leray. (Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux, Anjou, 1993. 126 pages. ISBN 2-9507651-0-6. Paperback 95F) A small island in the Loire (shown in an aerial photograph on the back cover), l'île de Parnay has up to 860 pairs of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, eight of Mediterranean Gulls *L. melanocephalus*, five of Yellow-legged Gulls *L. cachinnans*, an occasional pair of Common Gulls *L. canus*, 100 pairs of Common Terns *Sterna hirundo*, 30 of Little Terns *S. albifrons* and a few pairs of Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius*. This book reviews the breeding cycle of each in a series of short monographs, covering the timing of occupation, site selection, display, nest-building, eggs and young, food and kleptoparasitism, the formation of crèches and mortality. Each species is illustrated by line drawings and good colour photographs and essential details are contained in maps, diagrams and useful tables. RAH

Mammals of Britain & Europe. By David Macdonald & Priscilla Barrett. (HarperCollins, London, 1993. 312 pages. ISBN 0-00219779-0. £14.99) This new field guide covers the 200 species of land and sea mammals present in Europe. Each species is detailed under headings for recognition, habitat, measurements, etc., as well as a distribution map. The central block of colour illustrations includes additional views of tracks and droppings as well as comparisons with similar species. The guide contains a wealth of accurate information—as would be expected from its eminent author. As a field guide, it is a little short on identification details, while overfull on biology. It is not light, and has sharp corners which will not fit comfortably into the rucksack. DAVID ANDERSON

Hérons. By Mick Marquiss. (Colin Baxter Photography, Grantown-on-Spey, 1993. 48 pages. ISBN 0-948661-29-1. Paperback £7.95) In the same series as *Divers* (which covered all four species of diver *Gavia*, see review *Brit. Birds* 86: 442), with 20 pages of well-spaced general text concerning solely the Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, in a Scottish context, and a fine selection of photographs. JTRS

A World Checklist of Birds. By Burt L. Monroe, Jr, & Charles G. Sibley. (Yale University Press, London, 1993. 390 pages. ISBN 0-300-05547-1. £35.00) Sequence and nomenclature follow Sibley & Monroe (1990),

Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World, with amendments and corrections up to 30th September 1992 as published in Sibley & Monroe (1993), *A Supplement to Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World*, so this book provides a useful single reference at a much lower price than the other two volumes. JTRS

The Birdwatcher's Yearbook and Diary 1994. Edited by John E. Pemberton.

Buckingham Press, Maids Moreton, 1993. 320 pages. ISBN 0-9514965-4-9. Paperback £11.50. The thesaurus of superlatives has been exhausted during the previous 13 years' reviews. Once again, this is an excellent one-stop answer to most of your birdwatching questions. The task of checking all the entries is an immense one, for which Britain's birdwatchers owe the editor/compiler many thanks. A quick count revealed that over 20% of entries have altered in just one year, so, if your most recent copy is 1991, be warned that over half your information is now out of date. Features this year include an interesting article on the work of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, and a useful reminder on the care and use of optical equipment. In fact, only one question remains: does anyone really use this as a diary?

JULIAN HUGHES

Bird Impressions: a personal view of birds. By Darren Rees.

Swan Hill Press, Shrewsbury, 1993. 124 pages. ISBN 1-85310-286-5. £25.00. *Bird Impressions* is a collection of 94 paintings by Darren Rees, selected from his work to date, and accompanied by an eloquent text guiding the reader through the artist's workings and thoughts. Darren's paintings bring a breath of fresh air through any wildlife-art exhibition, so this book was eagerly awaited. My expectations were fulfilled. Executed in bold, free watercolour, the studies are full of light, colour and form, painted with all the vigour of a Tunncliffe or a Jonsson. All have the stamp of authenticity that only observation from life can give. Well produced and recommended.

ALAN HARRIS

Highland Sketchbook: a year in Glen Esk. By Derek Robertson.

(HarperCollins, London, 1992. 165 pages. ISBN 0-00-431590-8. £17.99) Artist Derek Robertson spent a year in Glen Esk, recording the wildlife and all that influences it. This book is the result, written diary style, interspersed with pencil sketches, watercolours and oils. The book suffers from an unsympathetic, 'cliché' design, which does not help the artwork, which has a rather dark brooding quality, particularly the oils. They largely lack a feel of light or life, found in the narrative, although there are some successes. ALAN HARRIS

Birdsong in Britain. By Geoff Sample.

Wild at Heart, London, 1993. CD. Running time 74 minutes. £12.99. No words, just bird song, mostly from woodland settings. Evocative, and ideal as a birthday present for an 'expat' relation or friend. The accompanying booklet names just a few of the many species which can be picked out. The quality of recording is excellent. JTRS

The Lost Ark: new and rediscovered animals of the twentieth century. By Karl Shuker.

HarperCollins, London, 1993. 287 pages. ISBN 0-00-219943-2. £14.99. *On the Track of Unknown Animals* by Bernard Heuvelmans (1958), based on his *Sur la Piste des Bêtes Ignorées* (1955), provided wonderful, exciting, light cryptoscience in contrast to the heavy zoological studies in my undergraduate days. Here is its successor. Gerald Durrell's 1992 Foreword even includes the same anecdote that appeared in his 1958 Introduction to Heuvelmans. Scores of discoveries, rediscoveries and will-they-someday-be-discoveries range from Dr Kiiti Thonglongyai's bee-sized bat, *Craseonycteris thonglongyai*, found in Thailand in 1973, probably the world's smallest mammal, to the Vu Quang ox *Pseudoryx nghetinhensis* discovered on the Vietnam-Laos border in 1992, as well as many birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes and invertebrates. JTRS

ALSO RECEIVED

Spiders. By Michael Chinery, with illustrations by Sophie Allington. (Whittet Books, London, 1993. 128 pages. ISBN 1-873580-09-6. £7.99)

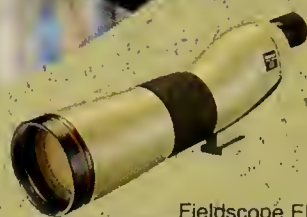
Mice and Voles. By John Flowerdew, with illustrations by Steven Kirk. (Whittet Books, London, 1993. 128 pages. ISBN 1-873580-08-8. £7.99)

World Checklist of Threatened Birds. 3rd edn. Compiled by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre. (Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough, 1993. 308 pages. ISBN 1-873701-45-1. Paperback £26.00) (2nd edn reviewed *Brit. Birds* 83: 394-395)

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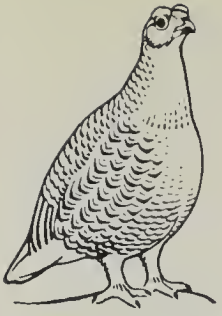
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Notes

Field characters of Senegal Thick-knee The Northern and Central African Senegal Thick-knee *Burhinus senegalensis* is discussed only occasionally in the literature, even in the most recent.

It is usually stated that the species is only fractionally different from the Eurasian Stone-curlew *B. oedinemus*, identification resting chiefly on the distribution of colour on the bill and the pattern of the upwing-coverts.

On average, it seems that the bill of Senegal Thick-knee usually shows more black, which extends from the tip and along the culmen to the bill base (rarely even onto both mandibles, covering the area around the nostril), but some individuals (apparently varying among different populations or age/seasonal groups) have black restricted to the area in front of the nostril and with very narrow and indistinct black on the culmen which is undetectable in profile, even at close range, whereas on some others it is paler and extends only partially towards the bill base (as occasionally found on some Stone-curlews, apparently chiefly of the races *saharae* and *indicus*). The bill of typical Stone-curlew shows a black tip confined to the area in front of the nostril, or sometimes extending farther along the cutting edges.

The wing-coverts pattern always provides the best character for separating the two species. Senegal Thick-knee is generally described as having only one broad pale greyish band bordered above by a narrow black band, lacking the (extra) upper white bar of Stone-curlew. Beware, however, pale individuals of Stone-curlew with reduced dark median-coverts bar (caused by moult, wear and bleaching), resulting in the upper and lower pale panels almost joining and becoming somewhat reminiscent of the much more extensive pale panel of Senegal Thick-knee; experience shows that identification of such faded birds demands great care. The wing-coverts pattern is not always easy to discern in flight, and, because of the pitfall described above, it is certainly not safe to identify the species in flight.

Subsidiary differences (albeit with degrees of overlap) are that Senegal Thick-knee has a marginally longer bill, and more prominent (larger) white markings on the inner and outer primaries, which can be observed in flight. If extremely good flight views are obtained, it may be possible to observe a distinct dark crescent-shaped patch on the outer side of the big pale panel, created by the blackish subterminal bands and wide white tips of the outer greater coverts; also, Senegal Thick-knee may show a more uniform uppertail, lacking the obvious pale and dark bars on the central tail feathers of most (but not all) Stone-curlews.

Leg colour is similar on both species, but often duller on Senegal Thick-knee. Finally, it should be noted that the high level of individual variation in



55 & 56. Senegal Thick-knees *Burhinus senegalensis*, The Gambia, October 1988
(Hadoram Shirihai)





57 & 58. Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedipnemos*: above, of race *saharae*, Israel, December 1986 (*Hadoram Shirihai*); below, of nominate race, Norfolk, May 1987 (*Chris & Jo Knights*)



head pattern, with large degrees of overlap (and inconsistent differences), render this feature of minimal use.

HADORAM SHIRIHAI

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Accentors in northeast European Russia On 15th July 1992, in shrub tundra close to the town of Nar'Yan Mar in the far northeast of European Russia (68°15' N, 54°30' E), at an altitude of less than 50 m, I located an unfamiliar passerine singing from the top of a distant conifer at the edge of a bog dominated by willow *Salix*. The song, a thin warble, was not unlike that of a Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis*. Upon closer approach, the bird was immediately identified as a Siberian Accentor *P. montanella* by a combination of its striking buffy-yellow supercilium contrasting with blackish ear-coverts and dusky-brown crown, together with a uniformly buff throat. There were rufous-chestnut streaks on the mantle and scapulars, and rusty fringes to the tertials and flight feathers, while the flanks were boldly streaked rusty-brown.

This species has also recently been recorded by Morozov (1987) working a little farther east, on the Bolshezemelskaya tundra, and in similar habitat at around 68° N, 58° E (Cramp 1988).

I returned to the same general area in mid August 1992 but failed to re-locate the species.

On 25th June 1993, I returned to Nar'Yan Mar together with C. F. Liggett and quickly located a minimum of five singing accentors in tall coniferous shrub tundra some 2 km north of the town. The birds were all singing from prominent positions on the tallest trees, perched either on top of the crown itself or on exposed upper branches, and again were producing thin accentor-type songs.

To my surprise, all five were clearly Black-throated Accentors *P. atrogularis*, differing from the 1992 bird in having a prominent black patch on the throat and chin, a thinner, buffy supercilium, dull grey-brown streaks on the flanks and more-prominent blackish streaking on the upperparts. An agitated individual of this species was later located by C.F.L. close to a shrubby 2-m-tall juniper *Juniperus* and, after some searching, a nest containing two sky-blue eggs was located at a height of 1.5 m in the thickest part of the bush. The closest previously known breeding area of *P. atrogularis* lies well to the south and east in the Ural Mountains (66° N, 59° E), where the species nests in the sub-alpine belt in clumps of stunted spruce *Picea* (Cramp 1988).

Our visits to Nar'Yan Mar were brief stopovers prior to flying farther north to study the breeding biology of Tundra (Bewick's) Swans *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* in the Nenetski State Game Reserve on open maritime tundra at Khabuicka on the west shore of Bolvan Bay (68°30' N, 53°50' E) as part of a collaborative project involving the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, together with Russian, Dutch and Danish scientists (see Rees *et al.* 1993). A paper detailing observations of the avifauna made during the summers of 1992 and 1993 is to be published in the *Russian Journal of Ornithology* in 1994.

(Bowler & Shchadilov, in press). A total of 99 species was located at Khabuicka, with a further 17 species in the Nar'Yan Mar/Pechora Delta area. Many of these records constitute considerable extensions to the ranges of species depicted in Harrison (1982), notably the summering of Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps grisegena* in the Pechora Delta and a breeding attempt by a pair of Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* at Khabuicka.

JONATHAN M. BOWLER

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Feeding technique of House Bunting In north Oman, House Buntings *Emberiza striolata* are widespread in their preferred habitat of bare hillsides by stony wadis with accessible water. In such places they are not particularly approachable, but, as is well known, the species tends to become ridiculously tame around human habitation, being, for example, 'one of the tamest and most familiar of the birds of the Saharan Oases' (Bannerman, 1948, *The Birds of Tropical West Africa*).

At the new Sultan Qaboos University, near the arid foothills of the western Hajer range 50 km west of Muscat, House Buntings occasionally appear on the residential campus and are then extremely confiding, foraging for small seeds on the ground almost at one's feet. A common additional feeding method is to jump up rapidly with a flutter of wings, seize a seeding grass or herb head just below the inflorescence and pull the plant stem down: the bunting then stands on the stem and plucks seeds from the inflorescence (plate 59); after a few seconds, it leaps up again to grab an adjacent stem, letting the first one spring up. We have seen buntings feed in this manner on the seeds of *Amaranthus graecizans*, *Chloris barbata* and *C. gayana*. One *C. barbata* stem was 36 cm long to the point of seizure (38 cm in total), but most seeding heads that the bunting uses are only half that height.

A similar technique is used by Grey Canaries *Serinus leucopygius* in Nigeria (Fry, 1975, *Bull. Niger. Orn. Soc.* 11: 42), and CHF has seen it employed by Purple Grenadiers *Uraeginthus ianthinogaster* in Kenya. It may prove to be a frequent option for a variety of ground-foraging granivores.

C. H. FRY and J. ERIKSEN

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59. House Bunting *Emberiza striolata* feeding on grass seed-head, Oman, December 1989 (Hanne & Jens Eriksen)



The inclusion of plates 55-59 in colour has been subsidised by support from Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd



Letters

Status of the two forms of Mediterranean Shearwater The recent decision to separate Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* from the Mediterranean Shearwater *P. yelkouan* but to leave 'Balearic' *P. (y.) mauretanicus* as a race of *yelkouan* appears to have an element of British insularity about it, and does not stand up to rational analysis.

In plumage and, more importantly, structure, the two 'races' of Mediterranean Shearwater are more distinct from each other than Manx is from 'Levant', which, of the two, it most resembles. Why should this be, when the two Mediterranean shearwaters have apparently evolved in close proximity to one another and when at least part of the population of each shares the same waters outside the breeding season? If the two were very closely related, it would seem natural for some mixing to occur, leading to interbreeding at colonies, particularly in the central Mediterranean. Where is the evidence for this?

Quite apart from the obvious plumage differences, which are well documented, it is generally acknowledged in the literature that 'Balearic' is larger and heavier than Manx. I certainly concur. 'Levant', on the other hand, is described as 'close in size' to Manx (*BWP*), and the standard identification guides do not indicate any major structural differences. I have seen many 'Levant' off the coasts of Greece and Turkey and consider that this form *does* have a characteristic 'jizz': it is a less 'rakish' bird than Manx, appearing slightly shorter- and blunter-winged. The flight in normal conditions has a 'pattering' quality, reminiscent of Little Shearwater *P. assimilis* to my eyes. Admittedly, 'normal' conditions in the Mediterranean and Black Seas differ from the norm in the North Sea and North Atlantic, but even in strong winds 'Levant' looks more compact.

If, then, the decision to accord monotypic specific status to Manx Shearwater is correct, it is illogical to leave 'Levant' and 'Balearic' Shearwaters 'lumped' as one species. The matter should be further reviewed. If both are accepted as full species, I would propose that these names be adopted.

ALAN VITTERY

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Dr W. R. P. Bourne has commented that: 'As noted in *British Birds* (83: 556), Cyril Walker, Colin Harrison and Graham Wragg have also argued that the Balearic and Levantine Shearwaters should be treated as distinct species in the course of their description of the large subfossil representative *Puffinus holei* (*sic*) in the Canaries in *Historical Biology* (3: 203-224), and there is now also a review of information about the similar (Californian) Black-vented Shearwater [*P. opisthomelas*] available in *Western Birds* (19: 89-104).' After further studies and consultation, we hope to publish a fuller comment from Dr Bourne and his collaborators, Andy Paterson and Pierre Yésou. EDS

Ruddy Shelducks in Britain The status of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* occurring in Britain was considered by Keith Vinicombe, John Marchant and Dr Alan Knox in their recent paper on 'Review of status and categorisation of feral birds on the British List' (*Brit. Birds* 86: 605-614). I feel that I should draw readers' attentions to my paper on this subject, covering the years 1965-79, prepared on behalf of the Rarities Committee, and published in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 446-455).

M. J. ROGERS

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Daurian Redstart and Daurian Starling in Scotland I enter the debate about the Isle of May Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus* with great reluctance, but feel I must respond (with economy, but without understatement) to the interpretation placed by Messrs Zonfrillo and Brockie (*Brit. Birds* 86: 629-630) on the feather condition of the Fair Isle, Shetland, Daurian Starling *Sturnus sturninus*. Their judgment was based on photographs (*Brit. Birds* 82: 603-612). The bird was caught on a dry day using a clap-net, but, with the grass being damp from earlier rain, we were confronted with a bird which, though generally dry, had the distal parts of its flight and tail feathers wet and matted. I made the decision, for reasons of best light conditions and out of concern for the bird's welfare, to begin the examination process with a photographic record, so organised a quick photo session immediately. Only when I saw that the bird remained alert and unstressed did I proceed with a detailed examination of structure and plumage. During this period of examination, the bird dried out to the extent that it regained its pristine condition. I was aware that our original photographs of bedraggled extremities would not present the bird in the best of lights (indeed, I commented on it at the time), but ruled out the option of further photos, choosing to put the welfare of the bird first and release it. All three of us (Riddiford, Harvey and Shepherd) were involved in the examination, and, though I must take responsibility as the main author of the in-the-hand description, PVH and KBS were fully consulted on all matters, including colour tone, feather sequences and wear. Some considerable discussion centred on the state and wear of the flight and tail feathers (as well as other critical tracts, such as wing-coverts) because we felt that this might, after reference to skins, enable us to clarify the bird's age. We were struck by the good condition of the bird, and described it as it was, including the broken outer tail-feather.

Zonfrillo & Brockie stated that 'the photographs show a bedraggled tail in which the state of wear would be difficult to assess'. I am afraid that the same comments apply equally to the primaries. Their rather different conclusions demonstrate how misleading judgments can be when made purely from photographs. I happily admit to fallibility (most spectacularly on the occasion of the famous Fair Isle Sanderling *Calidris alba* in August 1982), but unequivocally not to 'economic understatement'. Paul Harvey, Kevin Shepherd and I all share a policy of supplying the BBRC with the fullest possible dossier of information to assist the decision-making process for birds of first or exceptional occurrence.

I admire (but do not envy!) the BBRC and the BOURC for doing a job

which receives little thanks and occasional vilification. My feedback from birdwatchers is that there is a widely held belief and concern that a very cautious approach by the guardians of the British List threatens to condemn some birds to oblivion. Is this the point Zonfrillo & Brockie are making? If so, I welcome the debate, but let us have debate which concentrates on issues rather than personalities.

NICK RIDDIFORD

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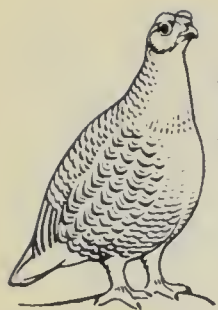
Monthly marathon



The close-up of the flying gull (plate 6) provided few problems, being named as: Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* (78%), Slender-billed Gull *L. genei* (20%), and Bonaparte's Gull *L. philadelphia* (2%). It was indeed a first-winter Black-headed Gull, photographed by I. Glaves in North Yorkshire in January 1989 (SCORE 22). The current leaders in the competition are Paul Archer (SCORE 439), Anthony McGeehan (405), G. Rotzoll (395), Heikki Vasamies (380) and M. A. Harris (365). The first person to reach a score of 500 will win a SUNBIRD holiday in Africa, Asia or North America. For this month's puzzle, see plate 60.

60. Sixth 'Monthly marathon'; fifteenth stage: photo no. 94. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 29 of the January issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th May 1994





Rarities Committee

news and announcements

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As no alternative nominations for election to the British Birds Rarities Committee were received, the Committee's own nominee, Ken Shaw, will commence his term of office on 1st April 1994. We welcome Ken, well known to many for his field expertise and also in his professional role as Regional Officer of the RSPB in East Scotland, based in Aberdeen. Alan Brown is due to retire from the Committee by rotation in 1995, so Ken Shaw will maintain our important links with Scotland from that time.

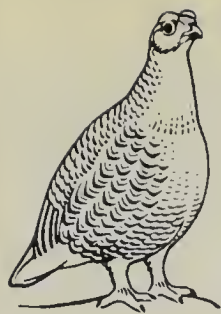
Retiring from the Committee on 31st March 1994 is S. J. M. Gantlett. Steve, well known for his sterling work with 'Birdline' and *Birding World*, has, through this involvement, a vast knowledge of the current birdwatching scene which will undoubtedly be missed by the Committee. While Committee members are not selected solely for their geographical location, Steve's role as an active Norfolk birder is, however, already covered by Andy Stoddart. We thank Steve for his contribution over the years.

The Committee has taken a particularly close look at its own activities and operations in recent months. One innovation is the introduction of a faster system, using just five voters instead of the full ten, for selected well-documented, multi-observed records of relatively straightforward species. Any of these may, by request of a member, go to the full Committee if problems arise, but in the overwhelming majority of cases the system has proved effective. Such efforts to reduce workloads and speed assessments without compromising standards help to achieve the desired result of a more complete Report, both by increasing the number of individual records included and by obviating the need to reduce the list of species considered.

The Committee wishes to remind observers of the value of submitting records early, rather than waiting until the end of each year, and once more to encourage recorders to adopt a 'safety-net' method, by inviting and submitting reports on multi-observed birds from known observers, if the finder/identifier has not done so after a reasonable period. We encourage the submission of notes in support of records from all observers of a rarity, and do not regard this as 'poaching', for we all wish to avoid the silly situation, which has faced us before, of well-known records failing to reach acceptance and publication in time for the relevant report because no-one submitted any documentation. We wish to stress, also, that *anyone* who has seen a rarity which has been omitted from an annual rarity report is invited to send details for our consideration.

R. A. HUME

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Added protection for two English bird sites

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION DIRECTIVE on the conservation of wild birds requires Member States to notify the Commission of sites which are of particular importance for certain species of wild birds. Two well-known bird sites have been designated Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in a recent announcement by the Department of the Environment. Part of the Forest of Bowland ('Bowland Fells') in Lancashire (15,000 ha) and Stodmarsh in Kent (480 ha) were added to the list of 75 previously designated sites. In addition, Stodmarsh was added to the list of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention.

The birding community will know Bowland well for a range of moorland species, including Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* and, probably most importantly, the Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*. Unfortunately, Bowland is infamous for the persecution of its nesting harriers. The designation will mean safeguards against possible developments (probably very unlikely in this area!), but is unlikely to assist the breeding success of our southernmost-nesting Hen Harriers.

Stodmarsh is well known as the site to add Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* to the birdwatcher's year list and has historically held breeding Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*. The latter is now only a winter visitor to the site, but, perhaps with luck or management, it could return. Regrettably, SPA designation is unlikely to assist the Great Bittern. Although we must congratulate the Government for continuing its 'rolling programme' of designations, we cannot help thinking that the rolling should be taking place down a slightly steeper hill.

... added protection?

It could be claimed that the preceding piece sounds a little sceptical about SPA and Ramsar designation. Almost at the same time as the designations in Lancashire and Kent were being announced, we heard that the RSPB and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust were urging Humberside County Council to ask British Coal to withdraw a planning application to mine beneath the Lower Derwent Valley SPA/Ramsar site. Subsidence there could have a serious and damaging effect upon the breeding, wintering and migrant wetland species for which the site is renowned.

Let us hope that a sensible solution is found and that the importance of the designations is accepted.

New conservation award

The Oriental Bird Club has joined forces with the optical retailers *In Focus* to offer the 'OBC/In Focus Conservation Awareness Award'. The award of £1,000 is being offered to nationals of the Orient for a project where the main emphasis is on conservation awareness. Such projects might include construction of a hide or information centre, funding of a camp for schoolchildren, funding of educational materials or attendance at a training course.

An information leaflet describing the Club's conservation activities, together with advice on proposals for the award, is available from the OBC's Conservation Officer, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

All Heaven Still in a Rage

Want to see Giant Nuthatch *Sitta magna*? No need to travel to the remote corners of Burma, Thailand or China. Just pop in to the bird markets when visiting Hong Kong. The Mai Po Marshes with its lure of Spoonbill Sandpipers *Eurymorhynchus pygmaeus* does not bring visiting birders into contact with the more unpleasant side of China/Hong Kong trade.

A recent report, the result of investigations by the RSPB and Vogelbescherming Nederland, exposes this thriving business. Many thousands of wild-caught birds are involved, some of them amongst the world's rarest. The Salmon-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua moluccensis*, for example, was extremely difficult to find in the wild in 1990, yet recorded exports totalled 4,600 in that year alone.

Common birds feature as well. A shipment stopped in Rotterdam by the Netherlands authorities consisted of two million frozen Eurasian Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus* on their way from China to Italy. With only some 110,000 pairs nesting in Britain (according to the *New Atlas*), the scale of the trade becomes slightly mind-blowing.

The advent of the Single Market within the European Community in 1993 allows wild-caught birds, once imported into any member state, to be moved freely between member states. We can have little confidence regarding import controls and checks at the borders of some EC countries, especially those with poor records in bird protection and conservation.

Friends of . . .

Forming a 'Friends of . . .' group is not a new idea, and we know of many of them around the country, ranging from nature reserves and bird observatories to sites of local amenity. The latest to be drawn to our attention has a fine ornithological pedigree.

What is the connection between Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* and Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*?

ANSWER: Tring Reservoirs, Hertfordshire. The ibis was recorded there in 1826 (24 years after the reservoirs' construction); the grebe first nested in Britain there in 1919; and the plover did likewise in 1938.

The stated aims of the new 'Friends of Tring Reservoirs' are to initiate a conservation-management plan with the co-operation of local landowners and other interested bodies, and to encourage protection of the site against adverse development. Further details from Rob Young on Aylesbury (0296) 668100.

Ruddy Duck winter research

Following breeding-season research on Anglesey, winter research into controlling Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* started in January 1994 in the Midlands.

A programme of research, licensed by English Nature, has included shotgun shooting at Eyebrook Reservoir, live-trapping at Rutland Water, detailed surveys at Swithland Reservoir (all in Leicestershire) and rifle shooting at Stanford Reservoir, Northamptonshire. Trapped Ruddy Ducks have been wing-tagged and released so that subsequent observations provide useful information on the species' movements. Please telephone reports to JNCC on Peterborough (0733) 62626.

The 13 conservation organisations that comprise the UK Ruddy Duck Working Group have got their act together and are operating in a very open and honest manner. Let us hope that history, and the survival of the White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala*, will show their actions to have been fully justified.

WeBS

Another acronym. This stands for the Wetland Bird Survey, launched in winter 1993/94 by the BTO, the WWT and the RSPB amidst much, welcome, publicity. Regular counts of coastal and inland wetland sites provide many important data and, among other things, help to identify the most crucial sites for conservation. More volunteer counters are always needed and, if any *BB* reader wants to know more, all he or she need do is to phone Chris

Mead on Thetford (0842) 750050.

Some of you may be scratching your heads over all this. Didn't we have long-standing wildfowl and estuary counts already, which provided all this information? Well, yes, we did. All that has actually happened is that they have been pulled together and very slightly revamped to form WeBS — a simple fact that some of the publicists seem to have forgotten to tell us.

Fair Dinkum bird names

At the risk of opening the debate yet again, we just could not resist referring to a recent piece in *Wingspan*, the official newsletter of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union.

The debate is classic, with statements such as: 'Ultimately, the names in popular usage should be the main criteria on which we base English names', together with '... have a responsibility to consider names on an international basis and it is here that we can *run into some problems*' (our italics). The RAOU has, however, taken the brave step of asking its members if they thought any names should change. Amongst the suggested replies were many that will be of little interest to British birders: e.g. replace Wompoo Fruit-Dove with

Wompoo Pigeon for *Ptilinopus magnificus*—note that Derek Goodwin (1967, *Pigeons and Doves of the World*) referred to this species as Magnificent Fruit Dove, Purple-breasted Fruit Dove or Purple-bellied Pigeon. Fortunately, everyone calls it *magnificus*.

Perhaps of more interest to British readers are the suggested changes from Yellow-headed Wagtail to Citrine Wagtail for *Motacilla citreola*, from Great Skua to Subantarctic or Southern Skua for *Stercorarius* (or *Catharacta*) *maccormicki* (our South Polar Skua), and from Thick-knee to Stone-curlew for *Burhinus magnirostris* (now *B. grallarius*), which was also called Willaroo and is now called Bush Thick-knee by Monroe & Sibley (1993, *A World Checklist of Birds*).

New English names

As anticipated, adoption of the new formal English names of birds (*Brit. Birds* 86: 1-2 and supplement) has not been immediate or universal. They have, however, been adopted in at least eight of the latest annual reports which have come to our notice: Avon (which gives both the old and the new names), Cornwall, Doncaster, Isle of Wight, Isles of Scilly (full international BOU names rather than the simpler *BB* ones), Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire. Doubtless others will soon follow these leading reports, and before long we shall all be taking names such as Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* and Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* as much for granted as we already do Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, which was adopted as recently as 1978.

Red Kites for all

Regular journeys by one of us across mid Wales are frequently enlivened by sightings of Red Kites *Mikrus mikrus*: it seems hardly any time at all since seeing a kite involved a great deal more than merely driving the Principality's main roads. The problem is, of course, that nine times out of ten it is difficult to stop for a better look at these splendid birds, so we welcome the news that the Wales Tourist Board and the RSPB have submitted a proposal to the Development Board for Rural Wales recommending the establishment of roadside 'Kite Spots', complete with interpretative facilities. Let us hope that the Board gives the scheme the green light. In the long term, the more people who can see, enjoy and learn about the Red Kite, the better.

New species for Britain & Ireland

There are still a number of fanatical bird-watchers out there who show no interest in anything without feathers. In recent years, however, we have encountered a growing number of birders with wider interests in natural history. Flight still seems to be important, however, since (in no particular order) dragonflies, bats, butterflies and moths seem to be the most popular. (Orchids also manage to creep in somehow.)

We have just heard of an addition to the British and Irish list, from Co. Clare: *Odon-*

thognophos dumetata or the Irish Annulet, a geometrid moth, which was first found on 7th August 1991. Since that date, several other examples have been recorded and breeding confirmed. This is a Central European species and, perhaps most exciting of all, the Irish records apparently refer to a new subspecies, *O. d. hibernica*. The species seems to be rather restricted in its Irish distribution, reflecting that of the caterpillar's food plant, buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica*.

Black-and-white flycatchers

Almost the whole of the latest (October 1993) issue of *Limicola*—over 50 pages (7: 222-276)—is devoted to a paper by Krister Mild on the identification of Pied *Ficedula hypoleuca*, Collared *F. albicollis* and Semi-collared Flycatchers *F. semitorquata*. There is a very detailed three-page summary in English, and the 51 figures and plates all have captions in English as well as German.

The annual subscription to *Limicola* is DM69 (outside Germany) and a single back issue costs DM16, from Christine Barthel, *Limicola*, Über dem Salzgraben 11, D-37574 Einbeck-Drüber, Germany.

Crime on the up

There is a dreary inevitability about the annual publication by the RSPB of its figures relating to crimes against birds. Year after year, we hope for news that the figures are falling; year after year, they continue to make depressing reading. The statistics for 1992 show an appalling rise of 20% over those published for 1987; incidents involving the shooting and destruction of birds of prey were almost three times as great as in 1987, and poisoning incidents rose by 65%. We are still being told by some who are prominent in various spheres of life in the countryside that all these things are the work of a minority and that the RSPB and others are grossly exaggerating the problems. Forgive us if we take a more jaundiced view.

Hong Kong Bird Report 1992

As well as the 60-page systematic list, this publication, edited by Geoff Carey, includes an additional 140 pages of papers and notes, many of which will be of great interest outside Hong Kong, and several have relevance to the Western Palearctic. Birds new to Hong Kong include Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica* and Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*. There are identification papers on snipes *Gallinago* and various wing-barred leaf-warblers *Phylloscopus*.

Copies are obtainable (£10.75 including p&p in UK; £11.75 including p&p in the rest of Europe) from Sebastian Anstruther, Barlavington Estate 2, Petworth, West Sussex GU28 0LG.

The Peter Conder Prize

The Cambridge Bird Club has recently announced that, in memory of its late President, Peter Conder, they will be offering an annual prize of £100, to be called 'The Peter Conder Prize'. The competition, based upon an original study of birds, will be open to all, but if it is part of an examination project so much the better.

There is only one rule: the successful entry should be suitable for publication as a short paper in the Club's annual report. Details from Bob Jarman on Cambridge (0223) 240261.

Selangor International Bird Race 1993

On 16th and 17th October 1993, the fourth Selangor International Birdrace took place in Selangor, Malaysia. Thanks to sponsorship from *Malaysia Airlines*, a number of foreign teams participated, including European teams from Britain (BFO), Ireland (sponsored by *Guinness Anchor*) and the Netherlands (sponsored by *Carl Zeiss*). Entries from Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia brought the total to 11 teams.

Foreign participation is actively pursued in order to attract publicity and support from sponsors for the maintenance of the Kuala Selangor Nature Park, which was founded in 1987 to protect mangroves south of the mouth of the Selangor River. A system of trails, hides and board-walks was created to facilitate birding and to increase awareness of nature conservation.

The race itself is run over 24 hours with a novel 3 p.m. start. Clear winners were the Singaporeans, with a total of 167 species, followed by the Dutch at a respectable distance, just ahead of Mike Chang's Malaysian team, the Thais and the Irish. Despite a lot of rain on the coast and fog inland, some good migrants were found, including Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* and Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*; among the unusual resident species recorded were Maroon-breasted Philentoma *Phileutoma velatum* and White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus*.

For further information about the race and about Kuala Selangor, contact Malaysian Nature Society, 485, Jalan 5/53, 46000 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia. (Contributed by Oran O'Sullivan)

A Convention to end all Conferences

There are those avid conference-goers who are always there. It might be the national conference of one of the leading ornithological societies, or just a local one-day get-together—but amongst those present will be the familiar 'conference-attender'.

The American Birding Association is now about to hold the ultimate: a six-day convention in North Dakota during 13th-19th June 1994. The programme is almost a book: birding workshops, field trips, ID contests, guest speakers, banquet (not an annual dinner in sight!), members' meetings, trade stands

(known as vendor displays), art exhibitions, and pre-convention and post-convention tours.

The ABA is expecting a gathering of over 500 birders and is organising 14 excursions to cope with the demand. Most of the workshops are repeated at least four times, and the menus range from pan-fried chicken to roast rib of beef.

If you are a conference (or convention) attendee you must not miss this one. Details from ABA Convention '94, PO Box 6599, Colorado Springs, CO 80934, USA.

SOC at Aviemore

The Scottish Ornithologists' Club's annual conference returned for a second year to Aviemore at the end of October 1993. Superb setting, great birding, excellent organisation, fine speakers and congenial company combined to make it a happy and enjoyable weekend.

It got off to a splendid start on the Friday evening with a rumbustious quiz – the panelists tending to be drowned by the audience. The Club's President, Frank Hamilton, was unable to attend Saturday morning's excellent talks on the theme of the oil-threatened North, but Ray Murray (duly elected as the new President) did the introductions. This gave Ray a chance to take off Frank by way of a tie of doubtful taste and string-supported spectacles. The organised afternoon outings produced a fine range of birds – including several Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*, Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus* and Crested Tits *Parus cristatus* – and it was these temptations which resulted in a couple of key officials arriving late for the AGM – what better excuse? The subsequent dinner and speakers were of the customary high standard, as was the ceilidh which followed.

Sunday morning's speakers seemed remarkably bright, especially since the first one had been observed still at the bar just a few hours before his talk. His was followed by talks on the Pied Piper treatment meted out to the Ailsa Craig rats (see *Brit. Birds* 86: 143) and on forest-nesting Merlins *Falco columbarius*, and the morning was brought to a close by a masterly, co-ordinated sound-and-vision presentation by Bobby Smith.

The conference proved once more that the SOC and its friends know how to enjoy themselves. Why not join them next year?

(Contributed by Michael Murphy)

Lumps and splits

Robert L. Pyle and Phoebe Snetsinger have made a useful comparison between the Sibley & Monroe (1990, 1992) and Clements (1991) world lists in the American Birding Association's newsletter, *Winging It* (5(12): 19-20).

World listers will find the comparative tables very useful. There are 106 differences. Compared with Clements (1991), Sibley & Monroe (1990, 1992) included 49 splits or additions, and 57 lumps or deletions.

The ABA address is PO Box 6599, Colorado Springs, CO 80934, USA.

Another shrike split

Red-backed *Lanius collurio*, Isabelline *L. isabellinus* and Brown Shrikes *L. cristatus* were split in 1977 (K. H. Voous, see *Brit. Birds* 72: 573-578). Paul Isenmann and Michel-Ange Bouchet, in the latest issue of *Alauda* (61: 223-227), treat the two forms of Great Grey Shrike which breed in France as relating to two different species: the northern *Lanius excubitor* (of the nominate race) and the southern *L. elegans* (of the race *meridionalis*). The ranges are parapatric, with no known overlap zone; their habitats, as well as morphology and some features of behaviour, differ. (If separated from the northern *excubitor*, the southern races are more usually named as *meridionalis*, of which the eastern *L. e.* (or *L. m.*) *pallidirostris*, the only migratory one, is on the British List.)

'Bird Watching' highlights

The April issue of the monthly magazine *Bird Watching* includes a preview of the forthcoming Chilterns Bird Fair; photo features on lekking Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* and on woodpeckers of the world; details of the new Zeiss binocular; and D. I. M. Wallace on birding in the 1980s.

Hotline Cyprus News

From spring 1994, Cyprus will be joining Mallorca and the Isles of Scilly in having a meeting place where it will be possible to collect all the latest bird news. Every morning from 1st March, Jeff Gordon will be in the 'Cocktails and Dreams Bar' on the road to Paphos Lighthouse in Kato Paphos. It will be possible to get all the latest information from a bulletin board and pick up a Cyprus check-list. Starting at the same time will be a Cyprus 'Hotline' with a daily diary and all the latest bird news on Paphos (06) 652203.

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Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 14th February to 21st March 1994

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* Fen Drayton (Cambridgeshire), 16th-17th February, Thrapston Gravel-pit (Northamptonshire), 18th February, Earls Barton (Northamptonshire), 20th February, and Great Linford Gravel-pit, Milton Keynes (Buckinghamshire), 22nd February to 2nd March (all presumed same).

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes* Individual seen in 1993 reappeared at Middleton (Co. Cork), 16th to at least 20th March.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* Colwick Country Park, Nottingham (Nottinghamshire), 17th-21st March.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* In Shetland: male at Mid Yell Voe, 14th February, Haroldswick, Unst, 20th February, and Westing (where it hit window), 25th February; female, Quarff (Shetland), 18th February; singles, North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 5th and 10th March, and Quoile Pondage, Downpatrick (Co. Down), 17th March.

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura* Single, previ-

ously seen in flight only (*Brit. Birds* 87: 143), at Great Island, Cobh (Co. Cork), 20th March.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* Tayport (Fife), 23rd February; Sunderland Docks (Tyne & Wear), 26th February to 7th March; Dungeness (Kent), 4th March; adult at Galway Docks, Galway City (Co. Galway), from 10th to at least 18th March; Fleetwood (Lancashire), 12th-17th March.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* Scotney Court Gravel-pit, Lydd (Kent), 6th March.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* Tresco (Scilly), intermittently between 28th February and 18th March.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius* Mold (Clwyd), 23rd February.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Dungeness, 4th March.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* Pennington Flash (Greater Manchester), 8th-21st March (potential first for Britain and Ireland).



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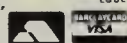
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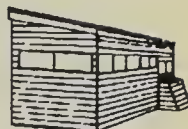
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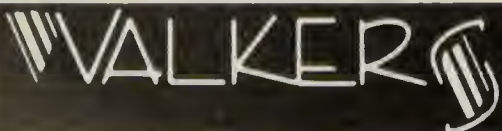
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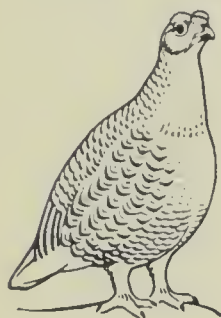
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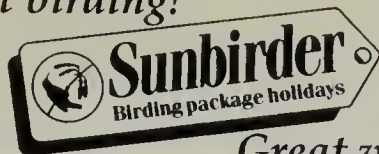
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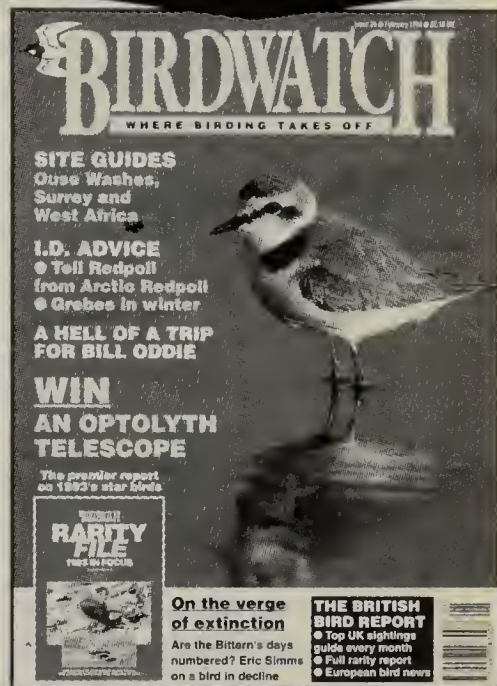
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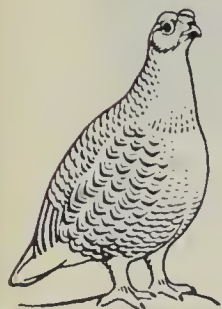
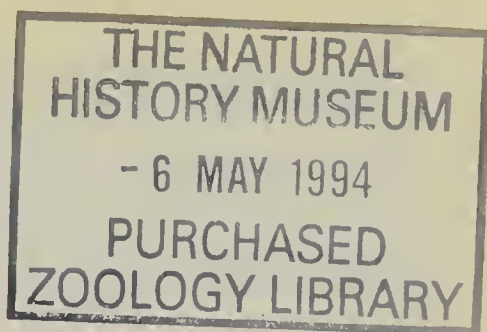
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British Birds

VOLUME 87 NUMBER 5 MAY 1994



Young Ornithologists of the Year

For the past 17 years, this annual competition has been run by the Young Ornithologists' Club, the junior section of the RSPB, and sponsored by *British Birds*. The 1993 competition was, however, the last to be organised by the YOC. The Editorial Board was unanimous in wishing to ensure that this long-established competition did not disappear. It forms a fine means of encouragement to young birdwatchers to take their hobby seriously, to study birds and to record their observations in a scientific manner. The entrants are truly the ornithologists of the future. Past winners of this competition and its precursors have included Dr David Lack, B. A. E. Marr, Dr Norman Moore, Dr Bryan Nelson, Dr K. B. Rooke, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and Donald Watson.

We are delighted to announce, therefore, that the title Young Ornithologists of the Year, with its associated awards, will be continuing, and will henceforth be run by *British Birds* (with the full approval and support of the RSPB and the YOC).

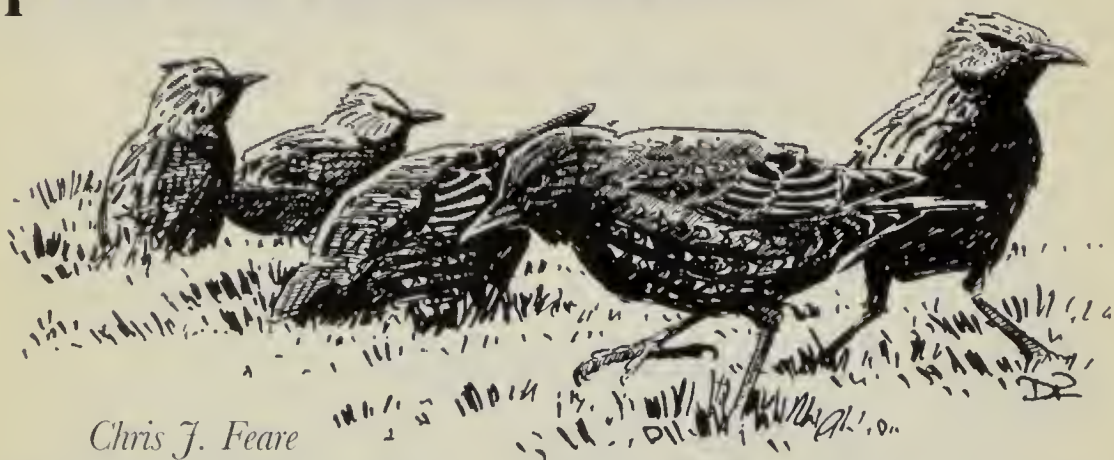
We are currently negotiating with a major sponsor, but finalising the financial aspects is, to us, less important than announcing this year's rules and ensuring that potential entrants know that the competition is alive and well and, now, living in Blunham. The titles are intact; the actual prizes are still to be announced.

RULES Entrants should submit their actual field notebook (not a carefully written, neat copy) covering at least a three-month period during May-August 1994. The judges (who will include Peter Holden, retaining the link with the YOC) will be looking for notes on identification, behaviour, habitat preferences and so on, not merely lists of birds seen. Entrants are not expected to be expert artists, but should attempt to document their observations by sketches as well as words.

The titles and prizes will be presented within three age-groups: 10-12 years, 13-16 years and 17-21 years (based on age on the closing date), so please include date of birth with your entry.

Entries should be sent to Young Ornithologists Competition, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK41 3NJ, and must be received by 20th September 1994. Entrants must be aged 10-21 and be resident in either the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland. All notebooks will be returned after the judging (provided that a suitable SAE is supplied when an entry is submitted).

Changes in numbers of Common Starlings and farming practice in Lincolnshire



Declines in the breeding populations of Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* in northern Europe were recorded from the early 1960s, and similar population reductions have subsequently been recorded farther south (Feare 1984). The British Trust for Ornithology's Common Birds Census recorded a decline in breeding populations in both farmland and woodland in Britain in the late 1960s, followed by a further decline since 1980 (Marchant *et al.* 1990); the latter decline has recently accelerated (Anon. 1991). Reductions in breeding populations in northern Europe should be reflected in reductions in wintering areas. There are, however, no routine monitoring programmes for winter farmland bird populations in western Europe. Nevertheless, Peris *et al.* (1991) recorded substantial reductions in the number of Common Starlings wintering in eastern and southern Spain, and Douville de Franssu (in Feare *et al.* 1992) has similarly recorded substantial falls in the numbers wintering in northwest France.

There have been no estimates of changes in numbers wintering in Britain, but the virtual absence of complaints of damage by starlings on farms in winter and the disappearance of traditional roosts in eastern England (own observations) provide anecdotal evidence of similar declines. In January 1975, the numbers of Common Starlings wintering in northeast Lincolnshire were recorded from road transects. Data were also collected on the types of crops grown on fields adjacent to the road. In January 1992, these same road transects were repeated, and the results of these two series of transects are reported here.

Methods

In mid January 1975, five road transects, each 10 km to 14 km long and designed to provide a sample of a minimum of 50 fields adjacent to the road, were plotted on 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey maps of northeast Lincolnshire. The transects were centred on the villages of Rothwell, Binbrook, Kelstern, Marshchapel and Avingham.

A car was used to drive around the transects between 09.00 and 14.00 GMT. The crops present in all fields that abutted the road were recorded, as were all Common Starlings seen from the transect, together with the kinds of field in which they were found. All data were recorded into a tape-recorder for subsequent transcription. In mid January 1992, the transects used 17 years earlier and the recording methods were followed as before.

Results

The number of Common Starlings recorded on the transects was significantly lower in 1992 than in 1975 (table 1)¹. The smallest reduction, 19%, was on the Marshchapel transect, where, in 1992, a pig farm provided a major attraction to starlings.

Table 1. Number of Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* counted on transects through five areas of northeast Lincolnshire in January 1975 and January 1992

More than one figure indicates that more than one transect was driven around that area in the year in question. Alvingham transect was 10 km in length; the other four were all 14 km

Year	Rothwell	Binbrook	Kelstern	Alvingham	Marshchapel
1975	749	478	483	794	655
	610	133	402	488	
	575	291	225	937	
1992	12	35	0	99	397
		235	0		6/1

In 1975, when large numbers of Common Starlings were seen on all transects, permitting an analysis of bird distribution among field types, 59.2%² were recorded on grass, 12.0%³ on winter fallow and none on winter crops. The remainder were recorded mainly at cattle/sheep/pig feedlots⁴ and at a sewage-farm⁵. In 1992, too few starlings were seen on most transects for meaningful analysis, but concentrations were associated with a piggery (Marshchapel) and a sewage-farm (Alvingham).

Table 2 shows the types of fields adjacent to the transect routes, divided into broad categories: grass, uncropped (plough, cultivated, stubble) and cropped (winter cereal, oilseed rape, kale, beans). Fields recorded as grass were predominantly short grass, some of which were grazed by cattle and sheep. The field types present differed significantly between 1975 and 1992⁶ on all transects except Binbrook⁷. Over all transects, these changes involved a 50.2% reduction in grass fields, a 54.5% reduction in uncropped fields, but a 272.3% increase in the number of cropped fields, predominantly winter cereal.

Table 2. Percentage of fields of different crop types recorded on five transects in northeast Lincolnshire, January 1975 and January 1992

	Rothwell		Binbrook		Kelstern		Alvingham		Marshchapel	
	1975	1992	1975	1992	1975	1992	1975	1992	1975	1992
No. of fields	57	68	69	69	52	63	79	61	74	87
Grass (%)	29.8	14.7	30.4	28.8	38.5	12.7	36.7	21.3	43.2	27.5
Uncropped (%)	45.6	32.3	37.7	26.0	44.2	17.5	48.1	13.1	47.3	10.3
Winter crop (%)	24.4	52.9	31.9	47.8	17.3	69.8	15.2	65.6	9.4	62.0

¹ The results of statistical tests are all given in Appendix 1.

Discussion

The data presented in this paper suggest a marked reduction in the number of Common Starlings wintering in agricultural land in northeast Lincolnshire between 1975 and 1992. It is unlikely that the low numbers recorded in 1992 represented a response to weather extremes, since the 1991/92 winter was generally mild, as was the winter of 1974/75 (Christie 1975).

A decline of the magnitude recorded here could result from a redistribution of the birds, as occurred in northwest France, where a northward shift in the distribution of ringed Common Starlings in western France resulted from changes in agricultural practice making food more readily available (Gramet & Dubaille 1983). The reduction in starling numbers recorded in Lincolnshire, however, parallels recent declines in northwest France and south and east Spain (Douville de Franssu *et al.* 1991; Peris *et al.* 1991). A decline as widespread as this suggests that it is caused by a large-scale population reduction rather than a shift in distribution.

A number of hypotheses have been proposed to explain the decline in breeding numbers in northern Europe, including changing land-use in the breeding areas (Varjo 1984) and pesticide use. There is evidence that changes in agricultural practice on the breeding grounds have reduced Common Starling numbers and breeding success (Täinen *et al.* 1989). It is doubtful that pest-control operations, mainly in France, have inflicted sufficient mortality to influence breeding populations (Douville de Franssu *et al.* 1988). There is some evidence that Common Starling breeding performance can be influenced by agricultural pesticides (Greig-Smith *et al.* 1992), but there are no reports of widespread starling mortality as a result of pesticide use.

This study indicated that there have also been major changes in agricultural practice in northeast Lincolnshire over the last 17 years, affecting the resources available to Common Starlings in winter. The amount of land devoted to arable cropping has increased at the expense of grassland, which, in 1992, was restricted mainly to very small fields; these provided limited sheep and cattle grazing, usually adjacent to farmsteads. Grassland represents an important resource for Common Starlings in winter (Feare 1981) and was extensively used in the 1975 transects. Grass fields provide a source of invertebrates, which are essential for the birds' maintenance of body mass (Feare & McGinnity 1987). A reduction in the supply of invertebrates could thus reduce the attraction to Common Starlings of agricultural land such as that now found in northeast Lincolnshire. In 1975, Common Starlings also fed in fallow land, especially stubble. The switch to autumn sowing since then has rendered these food sources less available, possibly reducing invertebrate food supplies still further and also depriving the starlings of waste grain during the winter. This decrease in food availability could lead to emigration or, if the agricultural changes reported here are sufficiently widespread, to reduced winter survival.

Further changes in certain agricultural practices were apparent in this study, although they were not quantified. First, intensive poultry and pig units are now designed to exclude birds in order to prevent entry of disease, and this denies starlings access to food sources that used to be available to them. Secondly, Common Starlings used to congregate at the open faces of silage

clamps, but on the 1992 transects it was readily apparent that virtually all silage is now stored in large polythene bags, again denying the starlings access to a formerly available food source. During the 1992 observations, it was notable that the only farm which supported a large flock of Common Starlings, on the Marshchapel transects, was one in which the buildings were entirely open to them, at which food was stored in the farmyard in a form accessible to them and which had a number of small grass paddocks nearby. This kind of farm is now scarce in northeast Lincolnshire.

The farming changes recorded in this study in Lincolnshire between 1975 and 1992 thus involved a loss of grassland and of fallow land during the winter, together with a loss of feeding sites where cereal grain was formerly available, especially feedlots for farm animals. These changes could have led to reduced availability of the starlings' major food sources in winter. This loss of winter food could thus have complemented the adverse changes in agricultural practice recorded on the breeding grounds and thereby contributed to the species' decline in northern Europe.

Acknowledgments

This study was funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The manuscript has benefited greatly from constructive comments by Andy Hart, Ian Inglis, Steve Langton, Tim Milsom and Will Peach; and Mark Fletcher kindly checked records to determine whether starlings had been killed in circumstances involving agricultural pesticides.

Summary

Counts of Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, from road transects in northeast Lincolnshire in January 1975 and January 1992, revealed marked declines in numbers between these years (table 1). There were also major changes in land-use, notably decreases in the amount of grassland and fallow (plough, cultivated and stubble) and an increase in the amount of autumn-sown arable crops (table 2). These land-use changes are likely to have reduced the availability of invertebrate foods for Common Starlings in winter, thereby contributing to the decline in starling numbers.

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Appendix 1. Results of statistical tests on statements made in the text

Numbers refer to those in the text

1. Sign test on means of censuses of each transect 1975 and 1992, $p=0.031$.
2. \pm SD 24.0, $n=13$.
3. \pm 11.7, $n=13$.
4. $7.8 \pm 25.4\%$.
5. 17.2 ± 27.7 ; this on the Alvingham transect only.
6. $\chi^2=14$, $df = 2$, $p<0.001$.
7. $\chi^2=4.7$, $df = 2$, $0.1>p>0.05$.



Twenty-five years ago...

The major feature of May 1969 was 'the great dearth of Whitethroats *Sylvia communis* which has been remarked upon almost throughout Britain and most of Ireland.' (*Brit. Birds* 62: 296).

Golden Orioles in East Anglia and their conservation



J. R. Dagley

The excitement created for British birdwatchers by the discovery of a breeding population of Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* in East Anglia was expressed by the late Laurel Tucker when she selected her experiences with them in an East Anglian poplar plantation as the most exciting and memorable birdwatching experience of her life (Tucker 1989). My own first visit to the oriole plantations similarly evoked lasting memories, my notes recording: 'The atmosphere after the heavy storm was quite unbelievably tropical, with these "liquid", bell-like calls and the air and vegetation saturated with water . . . ?'.

Golden Orioles have always been rare in Britain. Nineteenth-century records from East Anglia and Kent suggest a small population, with irregular breeding success. During the first half of the twentieth century, they seem to have been in decline (Sharrock 1974, 1976). Records picked up again in the 1950s and 1960s, although, between 1949 and 1967, only four pairs out of a possible total of about 15 were proved to have bred. After that period their numbers increased, with the colonisation of the East Anglian Fenland and its maturing plantations of hybrid black poplar *Populus* \times *canadensis*. The May and Baker Estate at Lakenheath, Suffolk, was the largest of these, but the first Golden Oriole nest was found on a nearby estate, in 1965. At that time, the majority of poplars on the May and Baker Estate were less than seven years old, and it was not until 1968 that the first oriole nest was discovered there.

At the same time, a number of local birdwatchers (later to become known as 'the Golden Oriole Group') developed a deeper interest in the fate of the orioles at Lakenheath and elsewhere in Fenland. From 1979, their studies intensified as concern grew about the change in land management on the May and Baker Estate. The poplar cultivars were reaching maturity (about 25-30 years old) and being felled, and the land was being returned to more profitable arable-crop production. Although Golden Oriole numbers were almost certainly underestimated at that time, the decline in nesting pairs was apparent. By the mid 1980s, fewer than ten pairs (with uncertain nesting

success) remained on the estate, and the acreage of poplars continued to be reduced.

This was not a local phenomenon. The large expansion in the home-based matchstick trade created by the Bryant and May Company in the 1950s-60s, which had led to a dramatic increase in the amount of poplar grown in small plantations and riverside shelterbelts scattered across lowland Britain, was by now in reverse. The British match and peeler-log market had slumped, with mills closing, and, although alternative markets remained, these were either not well known or did not inspire enough confidence among landowners. Little new poplar had been planted since the mid 1970s; the remaining plantations were ageing and, from the point of view of Golden Oriole habitat, were deteriorating as the canopy thinned and died back. Even with no further felling, it seemed, therefore, that the oriole population was likely to decline.

In response to this situation, the RSPB, the Nature Conservancy Council (now English Nature) and Suffolk County Council reached an agreement in 1984 with the May and Baker Estate to safeguard 40 ha (100 acres) of the remaining poplar plantations. With the Estate's co-operation and the Golden Oriole Group's assistance, the RSPB carried out a five-month study in 1987 (April-August) into the distribution and breeding success of Golden Orioles in and around the East Anglian Fenland. The results and recommendations of this study (Dagley 1987) are summarised in this paper, which also reports on the action taken since.

Study area

The main area of survey ranged from Snettisham, Norfolk, in the north to Mildenhall, Suffolk, in the south, and from Ely, Cambridgeshire, in the west to Thetford, Norfolk, in the east. The area between Thetford and Norwich was also explored, although less intensively. The Golden Oriole Group members visited 15 poplar plantations in the main area to which the RSPB did not have access.

Methods

Apart from five small poplar stands, all woods were visited at least twice for a minimum of 1½ hours per visit. All 90 poplar plantations in the study area had been visited by the first week of June, and all non-poplar woods had been checked by the end of June.

During a visit, after a preliminary scan of the canopy with binoculars, observations were carried out by walking along the rows of trees, making frequent stops. In non-poplar woods, rides and footpaths were followed. Golden Orioles are secretive, remaining almost exclusively in the canopy, and, generally, the first sign of an oriole's presence is its calling or singing. Later in the season, they become quieter and often call only in defence immediately around the nest. At these times, frequent observation stops are necessary. Using these methods, the latest discovery of an oriole pair was on 17th June.

Observations of behaviour were made from the ground, using binoculars. No hides were employed, and, as disturbance had to be kept to a minimum, observations near the nest were frequently curtailed. The areas of the plantation in which the orioles were seen feeding were recorded. In an

attempt to record the birds' foraging behaviour more precisely, the canopy of poplar trees was divided into thirds—low, mid, and high canopy—with low canopy starting at about 8 m above ground level.

A questionnaire was used to ask owners about their plans for their poplar plantations over the ensuing five years (1987-1992) and to find out what they knew about the market for poplar.

Vegetation-structure survey

Records were made of the size (in ha) of each plantation, the numbers and density of trees, the characteristics of the understorey and the ground flora. The mature poplar trees were generally spaced 8 m apart, and so there were approximately 160 trees per hectare. Canonical variate analysis (see Manly 1980) was used to test for any differences between woods containing orioles and woods from which orioles had never been recorded.

The nest and nesting site of each Golden Oriole pair were recorded in detail, including the height and orientation of the nest and the height and circumference of the nest tree.

Poplar cultivar and leaf damage: a measure of insect abundance

The division of canopy levels into low, mid and high was also used in a rudimentary assessment of the extent of leaf damage on different poplar cultivars caused by phytophagous (leaf-eating) insects, especially caterpillars. Three of the most common cultivars, 'serotina', 'robusta' and 'heidemij', were examined. Trees were selected at random (using random-numbers tables) from among the rows and columns in each plantation. From beneath the tree, leaves were scored on the basis of the area of each leaf that had been eaten, for each level of the canopy of each tree. Leaves sampled from felled trees in the same part of the plantation acted as controls for the scoring method. This limited method of sampling allowed a mean score of leaf damage to be calculated for each poplar cultivar.

Results

Distribution and numbers

Of the 90 or so poplar plantations and shelterbelts visited in the study area, 32 had been used as nesting sites by Golden Orioles at some time since 1965. In 1987, Golden Orioles were present in 24 of these sites, with at least 26 pairs and an additional two singing males. Of these, 18 pairs were confirmed at least to have constructed a nest, and the majority were found to have laid eggs. No breeding attempts were discovered in non-poplar woodlands, even in situations where poplar plantations, some with singing males present, adjoined directly.

At a number of plantations, including known previous breeding sites, access for survey work was denied. Taking this into account, it is estimated that, in total, up to 30 pairs of Golden Orioles were present and attempted to breed in the study area.

Breeding success

The breeding success in 1987 was very low. From the 18 definite nesting attempts, only 17 young were raised; nine failed to produce any fledged young and a further five produced only one fledgling each (table 1).

Table 1. Nesting success of Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* in East Anglian Fenland in 1987

	NUMBER OF FLEDGLINGS PER NEST					
	0	1	2	3	4	Total
No. pairs/nests	9	5	1	2	1	18
Total no. fledglings	0	5	2	6	4	17

The main reason for the low recruitment was almost certainly the very wet and cold conditions that summer. The critical month of June, when the nestlings hatch, was the wettest on record, and the rain was also regularly accompanied by strong winds. Those pairs whose eggs hatched before the appalling weather that occurred on 18th-22nd June (the majority of pairs) suffered serious or complete losses. Later-nesting pairs did better, with one pair raising fledglings from all four eggs laid.

Hypothermia and lack of food would seem to have been the most likely causes of death of the nestlings. Predation may have explained the losses from two of the nests, but in both cases the predator remained unidentified. The adults' inexperience may have been another contributory factor: a number of females appeared young, being grey and streaky, and several nests either were not completed or were so inexpertly constructed that the weight of the eggs or nestlings may have been too great for the structure to withstand.

Timetable of events

Males arrived in early May, about a week before the females. The third week of May was the most active time for pairing and all pairs had formed by the end of May (table 2).

Table 2. Breeding timetable of Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* in East Anglian Fenland in 1987

	First date	Last date
Arrival	6th May (males)	23rd-31st May
Pairing	14th May	31st May
Nest-building	18th May	10th June
Nest completion	17th-31st May	19th June
Egg-laying	1st-8th June	19th June
Hatching	10th-14th June	1st July
Fledging	25th June	20th July
Departure		30th August

Nests took from about one week to ten days to build, a job that seemed to be carried out exclusively by the female, with the male in attendance and calling intermittently. One to two days after completion of the nest, egg-laying began. This spanned a few days, and eggs hatched about a week later, from mid June onwards. Most nestlings had fledged by the first week of July. The family then remained together in the territory for at least a further week.

The bad weather of 1987 delayed the onset of breeding by about one week to ten days compared with the 1986 season. In any year, however, the breeding season is short and the parents and young have normally left their breeding site before late August.

In spite of the rate of nest failures (see above), pairs with dead nestlings did not attempt to nest again. One pair, however, following disturbance, abandoned its eggs and re-nested nearby in mid June, raising one fledgling by 20th July.

Territory, nest location and foraging

Territory size was not easily ascertained for the 18 nesting pairs observed, but estimates were made (table 3). For the six pairs in large multi-compartmented plantations, the distances from the nest of sites at which they were seen feeding were recorded, and over the breeding season pictures of their territory boundaries were drawn up. Occasional territorial disputes between pairs on the May and Baker Estate allowed a tightening-up of these estimates. It was more difficult to be certain about the territories of the 12 pairs in small, isolated plantations or in shelterbelts; fewer observations were made of these pairs, which in several cases were seen foraging in trees up to 500 m from their nest-site plantation or shelterbelt. The orders of magnitude of the numbers of poplar trees available to each pair are, however, considered to be reasonable estimates.

Table 3. Estimates of territory size and number of poplar trees *Populus* accessible to Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* pairs in large and small plantations in East Anglian Fenland in 1987

	NEST-SITE LOCATION			
	Shelterbelts or small plantations (<6 ha)		Multi-compartmented large plantations (>10 ha)	
	Range	Mean	Range	Mean
Total pairs		12		6
Territory size (ha)	1.5-6.0	3.98	10-34	19.6
No. of trees used by pair	100-960	534	1,910-5,414	3,198

The six pairs in the larger plantations had five to ten times the number of trees in which to forage compared with those nesting in the small plantations (table 3). A pair on the May and Baker Estate had the largest territory, at around 34 ha, larger than the majority of ancient woodlands remaining in eastern England (Kirby *et al.* 1984). No significant differences in the timing or success of nesting were observed, however, between the oriole pairs in the two categories of plantation. Males appeared to set up singing territories at about the same time across all plantations, rather than fighting it out in the larger plantations and then dispersing to the smaller ones. An understanding of the nature of competition for territories would, however, require a more sophisticated study, using individually marked birds. It is worth noting, perhaps, that in 1987 the largest number of young were raised by a pair nesting in one of the smaller territories (4.87 ha).

Golden Orioles occasionally nest low down in alders *Alnus* and in orchard trees, as well as in young poplars, but the results suggested that the Fenland

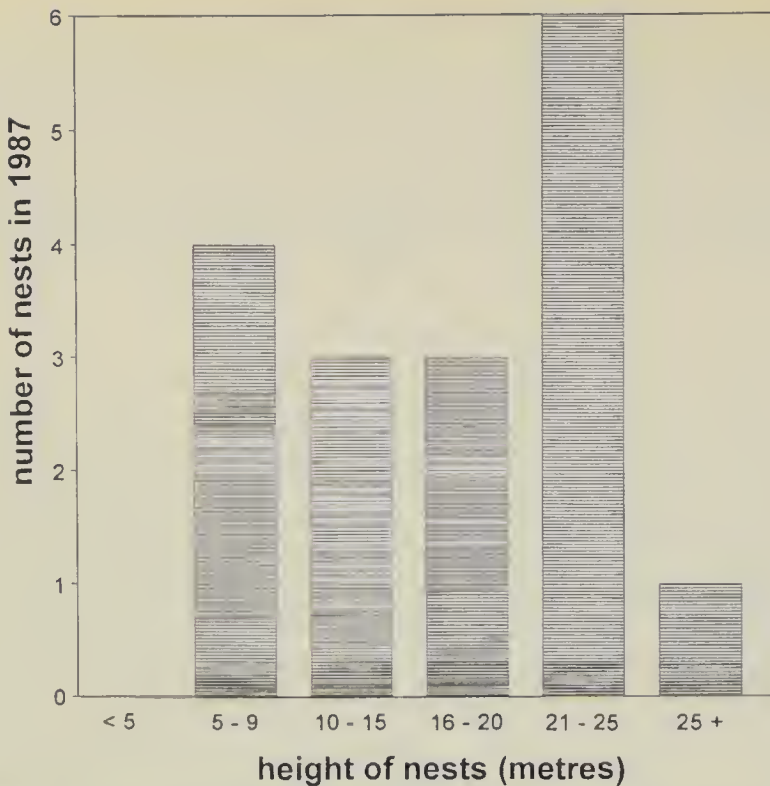


Fig. 1. Nest heights of Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* in East Anglian Fenland in 1987

birds have a preference for nest heights above 10 m (see fig. 1), with a mean in 1987 of 16.6 m.

Within their territories, Golden Orioles were seen feeding only in the canopy of poplar trees. They were never seen using the elders *Sambucus nigra* found in many of the woods, and they were not observed on the ground. They spent most of their time gleaning food from the underside of the leaves in the high-canopy zones (table 4), where they would often hover while picking caterpillars from the leaves. These observations agree with those of other studies, which found the Golden Oriole to be a high-canopy specialist and the understorey structure to be immaterial (Cramp & Perrins 1993).

Table 4. Proportion of time spent by Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* in different canopy zones of poplar trees *Populus* in East Anglian Fenland in 1987

	NUMBERS (AND PERCENTAGES) OF OBSERVATIONS			Totals
	Low canopy	Mid canopy	High canopy	
Males	8 (3.5%)	23 (10.2%)	195 (86.3%)	226 (100%)
Females	11 (10.7%)	18 (17.5%)	74 (71.8%)	103 (100%)

Density and vegetation structure of plantations

In the analysis that compared the structure of plantations (including the understorey) containing or known to have contained Golden Orioles with the structure of those in which orioles had never been recorded, no significant differences were revealed by 'Jackknife allocation' (see Manly 1980).

The most favoured poplar cultivar seemed to be 'robusta' (fig. 2). This almost certainly reflected the fact that this was the most common and widespread cultivar in the study area. On the other hand, despite the large

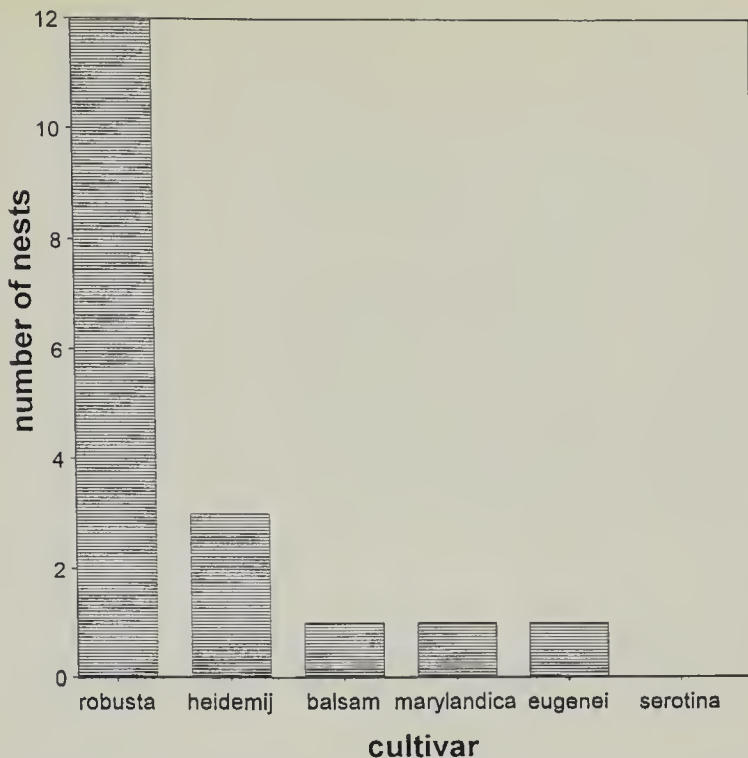


Fig. 2. Numbers of nests of Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* in different poplar *Populus* cultivars in East Anglian Fenland in 1987

amount (about 26 ha) of 'serotina' on the May and Baker Estate, this cultivar was not used as a nesting tree, and a number of compartments containing 'serotina' and 'gelrica' were hardly used for foraging. Several of these compartments contained trees in a poor state of health, and this, in addition to the late-leaving characteristics of 'serotina', may also explain its apparent lack of attractiveness to nesting and foraging orioles.

Insect abundance in relation to poplar cultivar

In the analysis of leaf damage on the three poplar cultivars 'serotina', 'robusta' and 'heidemij', significant differences were revealed between the level of damage on 'serotina' trees and that on the other two cultivars. Both 'robusta' and 'heidemij' showed more leaf damage than 'serotina'. This suggests that insects may be more abundant on 'robusta' and 'heidemij', and insect abundance may be part of the explanation for the orioles' apparent preference for certain cultivars.

Landowners' attitudes to poplars

The questionnaire survey of attitudes to poplar revealed that only one or two landowners regarded this as a valuable timber tree. Many knew little about the possible market now that Bryant and May had left the scene. Although matches are now manufactured using imported wood, the market in 1987 was still in a reasonable condition because of extra demand for peeler logs for vegetable-packing and saw logs for vegetable crates and pallets.

In addition to this, a number of owners with important poplar shelterbelts around their arable fields had decided to replace these with alder and other species.



61-63. East Anglian Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus*: breeding habitat and female carrying food, June 1991 (Chris Knights)





The amount of poplar in the main study area that owners planned to fell between 1987 and 1992 was 96.8 ha, with only 19.6 ha planned for replacement planting. This would represent an 18% loss of the area of poplar existing in 1987. There were no plans for additional poplar-planting.

Discussion

This study confirmed the decline in Golden Oriole numbers at the May and Baker site and the intimate linkage between the fate of poplar as a commercial crop and the success of the birds. Despite the decline in poplar plantations in the Fenland basin (up to 80% felled in some parts of the study area), the oriole population does not seem to have responded by spreading out from the centre of its distribution. No resultant increases have been seen in Golden Oriole records from the rest of East Anglia. Judging from the 1987 breeding season, poor recruitment may partly explain this, but the preference for poplar seems likely to be an important factor.

Poplar is among the Golden Oriole's favoured tree species for feeding and nesting on the Continent (Cramp & Perrins 1993). It is not, however, the most frequented species, and a much wider range of trees is used than in Britain. Within this range, there is a wide variety of preferences for nesting trees among different populations of orioles. Indeed, in one study area in western Germany, 88% of nests were in pines *Pinus* (see Cramp & Perrins 1993). This wider range of tree species used probably explains the lower average height of nests on the Continent (11.1 m in pines; 5.9 m in deciduous trees) compared with the average height found in East Anglia (16.6 m).

The preference of Fenland Golden Orioles for poplar may be due to a number of factors. It may be evidence that the Fenland population originated from an expansion of the populations in the Netherlands and Belgium, which are found almost exclusively within the poplar plantations. The few Essex and Kent pairs, which breed in ancient, coppice-with-standards woodlands with little or no poplar, may originate from breeding populations farther south in Europe; they have been found nesting most commonly in sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* (A. J. Prater verbally; pers. obs.).

Another possible explanation is the vacant-niche hypothesis, or 'tundra effect'. In winter, the resident bird population in poplar plantations is small and limited to a narrower range of species than in similar-sized native woodlands. In spring and summer, a poplar stand contains a disproportionate number of migrant species, often at exceptionally high densities (e.g. Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*). The suggestion is that, because the plantations hold relatively few resident bird species, migrants, such as Golden Orioles, find them easier to colonise. The same explanation may hold true for Golden Orioles in the sweet-chestnut coppices in Essex and Kent.

In addition, Golden Orioles in Britain are at the northern limit of their breeding range, and as a result they may be able to survive and breed successfully only in their optimum habitat and may be less able to disperse and to exploit new areas.

Whatever the reason for this close association between Golden Orioles and hybrid black poplars in Britain, the implications are clear. For the Golden Oriole breeding population to be maintained, poplar-planting needs to be

promoted in the Fenland study area. The first priority must be to provide replacement plantations for the areas lost in the middle to late 1980s. The next step has to be to ensure that there are replacement plantations for the existing 30-40-year-old ones, the trees of which are now over-mature and with thinning canopies. The target should then be to establish a wide age structure across the plantations as a whole, so that, as plantations mature and are felled, there are others, of the right age to attract Golden Orioles, to replace them. Unlike the plantings in the 1950s and 1960s, however, any new planting must avoid wetland and marginal riverside areas of existing nature-conservation value.

In any new plantations, the choice of poplar cultivar is likely to be very important. A number of new cultivars developed in Belgium have large leaves and early-leaving characteristics (as 'robusta' has) which appear likely to be attractive to orioles. They are also faster-growing, which could be important in closing the gap in suitable habitat that has been created by the recent lack of planting. The evidence suggests that Golden Orioles will not colonise the existing cultivars until these reach 7-8 years of age. The new cultivars may be attractive to the birds when the trees are 4-5 years old. The resulting shorter harvesting rotation for future poplar crops should also make them more attractive to farmers.

In addition, the design of the plantations will be important. A combination of a number of small plantations (e.g. 3 ha) and wide shelterbelts on a farm estate is likely to attract more Golden Orioles than the equivalent number of poplar trees planted as a single continuous block (see above, and also table 3).

As mentioned earlier (page 214), however, there were very few Fenland farmers planning any new poplar plantations. Only one or two of those interviewed regarded poplar as an attractive crop, and few knew to whom they could sell the crop and how it could be marketed.

Since 1987, there have been a number of different attempts to improve this situation, both for the Golden Orioles and for the poplar market.

- (i) Although no extensive survey has been carried out in the study area since 1987, the Golden Oriole Group continues to monitor the core sites of the population (see table 5) and is organising a national survey in 1994 (see *Brit. Birds* 87: 148).
- (ii) In April 1991, the RSPB arranged a public meeting with landowners and land-use advisers at the National Farmers Union headquarters in Ely, Cambridgeshire, to highlight the value of poplar to Golden Orioles and the market options available. An RSPB leaflet sponsored by Tilhill Forestry and an RSPB strategy booklet on *Golden Orioles and Poplars* (Prater 1991) were launched at this meeting.
- (iii) New information on markets for poplar and the new faster-growing cultivars was made available by Tilhill Economic Forestry in a leaflet published in 1992.
- (iv) In summer 1993, the RSPB set up a research project investigating the food availability for Golden Orioles in different poplar cultivars, to try to examine in greater depth the implications from the observations made in this 1987 study.
- (v) In 1993, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the RSPB prepared a species action plan for the Golden Oriole.
- (vi) Cambridgeshire County Council now offers help with planting of poplars in the Council's part of Fenland, with its tree-planting package for landowners.
- (vii) The RSPB is now routinely consulted by county councils on any landowner's proposals to fell poplar plantations within the Fenland area.



64 & 65. Male Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* at nest with young, East Anglia, June 1993
(Chris Knights)





66 & 67. Above, female Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* and, below, both parents with two nestlings, East Anglia, June 1993 (*Chris Knights*)



So far, the efforts of the Golden Oriole Group together with continued management work by the RSPB have helped to sustain the Fenland oriole population. Numbers in 1993 were much the same as those recorded during the 1987 study (table 5), and the results of the national survey to be undertaken in 1994 will be of especial interest. It remains to be seen whether the initiatives listed under (i) to (vii) above can maintain and improve the fortunes of this attractive and rare breeding summer visitor to Britain.

Table 5. Numbers of pairs of Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* in main breeding areas of East Anglia, 1987-93

All data below supplied by the Golden Oriole Group

Year	NUMBER OF BREEDING PAIRS		Total
	Confirmed/probable	Possible	
1987	21	8	29
1988	14	8	22
1989	18	5	23
1990	14	7	21
1991	15	3	18
1992	20	6	26
1993	20	9	29

Acknowledgments

The work described in this paper was carried out as an RSPB research project. I should like to thank Tony Prater for his encouragement and assistance with this paper, and Dr Rhys Green for supervising the project. The members of the Golden Oriole Group were an inspiration: I thank them for their dedicated fieldwork before and during the course of the project, and I wish them good luck with their continuing survey work; in addition, I thank them for providing the data for table 5. I am grateful to the May and Baker Estate for allowing me to live in their plantation and to all the other landowners who allowed me to survey their woods. Thanks also to the Norfolk Naturalists' Trust for the use of their offices and the habitat-survey information. I thank Magda Charalambous for helping to produce the figures for this paper.

Summary

In 1987, a survey of breeding Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* was undertaken in the Fenland of East Anglia. It was estimated that 30 pairs were present in the study area, of which 18 were confirmed attempting to nest. All breeding attempts took place in plantations or shelterbelts of hybrid black poplar *Populus* × *canadensis*. Golden Orioles exhibited preferences for particular hybrid poplar cultivars; palatability to insects seemed to be the most important feature of the favoured cultivars. Breeding success in 1987 was poor, with only 17 fledglings reared from the 18 nesting attempts; unusually cold and wet weather in mid June was considered to be the cause of the low recruitment. The acreage of poplar plantations has declined by up to 80% in some parts of the study area, and Golden Orioles seem likely to decline as the remainder is cleared. Active promotion of poplar-planting is recommended to help maintain the Golden Oriole population in Britain. A large number of small plantations (1-3 ha) is likely to support more pairs than the same acreage of a large plantation in the same location. Positive management has so far maintained the population at the 1987 level.

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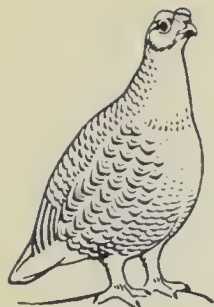
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Readers are reminded of the survey/census of Golden Orioles currently being carried out in England (*Brit. Birds* 87: 148). EDS



Request

Photographs of 1993 rarities needed Colour prints, black-and-white prints and colour transparencies are needed to illustrate the Rarities Committee's next report. Please send prints or slides (as soon as possible) to Mrs Sheila Cobban, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ. We rely on readers' help, so that we can include the best possible selection. Thank you.



Reviews

Bird Migration: a general survey. By Peter Berthold. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York & Tokyo, 1993. 239 pages; 50 graphs and other figures. ISBN 0-19-854692-0. Hardback £35.00. ISBN 0-19-854691-2. Paperback £17.50.

Even if migration is not your main ornithological interest, the subject is so basic to the attraction of birds that no birdwatcher can fail to be fascinated by the mysteries shrouding the phenomenon and the gradual exposure of some of the principles involved.

This book covers much more — very much more — than merely ‘How do they find their way?’, but the vast subject is dealt with logically and is broken up into digestible single-subject sections, each self-contained (so there is some repetition, but this is helpful and never unnecessary). The layout is rather like that of a school textbook, which initially is somewhat off-putting, but this soon becomes a welcome aid to cross-referencing between subjects and ideas.

The range of subjects is comprehensive — the book is crammed with them — and if any relevant topic has been omitted I have failed to spot it. Professor Berthold not only summarises the world’s literature, but is also not afraid to interpret, extrapolate and speculate. He provides absorbing, concentrated accounts of not just how birds do it, but also why, how it develops, how they prepare for it, and so on. Seldom is there a simple, single answer: a whole range of strategies is used by different species or by different populations of the same species or by one population under differing circumstances. Almost every aspect is more complicated than it appears to be at first — and this book has summarised and simplified. Terms are well explained and defined at their first mention in the text (but their collection into a glossary would be a helpful addition).

Many of the facts may be familiar to *BB* readers — though it is useful to have them carefully collated, integrated and summarised — but every now and again a fact, an idea or a conjecture sparks through to ensure constant interest. For example, I had not previously come across the prophecy that the nomadic wanderings of Continental Common Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* may decline in frequency, magnitude and extent as the spruce *Picea* adapts to acid-rain damage by fruiting more frequently, allowing the crossbills to become sedentary.

It was interesting to be told that migration is not a particularly hazardous occupation for a bird — contrary to our own view of travelling as being adventurous and filled with potential dangers. At least in a northern, Holarctic context, remaining as a resident bird is considerably more life-threatening (as demonstrated by comparing the brood sizes and number of broods required to achieve population equilibrium by migrant and by resident species, the former having fewer, smaller clutches).

Just as our view of the hazards of migration is falsely coloured by human experience and the occasional spectacular avian catastrophe, so our view of the speed of migration is biased by occasional examples of huge distances travelled by a marked migrant bird in a very short time. Don’t we all know of the Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* that returned over 4,000 km to Skokholm, Dyfed, from Massachusetts in 12 days? Or the conjectured flights right across the Sahara in one night? The evidence, however, is that, in the main, passerine migrants travel about 50-100 km per day, interspaced with one-day or longer rest/refuelling breaks, so that the average is probably 50-75 km per day. (When did those East Coast Pallas’s Leaf Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus* set off from Siberia?) Migration is often leisurely, a few hours at a time, with intermediate refuelling sites, not a mad dash from breeding area to ‘wintering area’ (a fact so apparent within Africa, but less obvious to North European observers).

Peter Berthold has included many British examples, especially from BTO work, and worldwide literature is quoted, but in general most examples are, naturally, German (for this book is a

translation by Hans-Günther Bauer and Tricia Tomlinson from the original *Vogelzug — Eine kurze, aktuelle Gesamtübersicht*, 1990). There has been no (or little?) attempt to substitute or to add British, or even English-language, references to the same phenomena, so the book's contents *read* as if they are translated from the German. I am also not sure whether to blame the author, the German language, the translators, the editors or OUP for a few horrendously complicated sentences (e.g. not one, or even two, but three sets of parentheses interwoven within a single sentence). There are very few instances of apparently erroneous translation, but one or two appear to have changed the author's original meaning, and there is the odd dubious bird name (e.g. what species is 'American sparrow'?).

Do not, however, let this put you off. The book, although covering an enormously complex subject, is well written, well ordered, instructive and entertaining. The author's lucidity shines through the slight barrier always created by translation from one language to another. I was very sorry when I came to the end of a very good read: if it had been a novel, I would have been eagerly awaiting the sequel. I thoroughly recommend *Bird Migration*. Its five-page synopsis should be required reading for everyone purporting to be interested in the subject. That then cannot fail to whet their appetites for the whole of this book. Buy it!

J. T. R. SHARROCK

The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland 1988-1991. Compiled by David Wingfield Gibbons, James B. Reid & Robert A. Chapman. T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1993. 520 pages; 211 line-drawings; over 600 distribution, change and abundance maps. ISBN 0-85661-075-5. £40.00.

This is without doubt one of the major ornithological publications of the decade. The 1976 *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* was a landmark in its day, setting a standard and providing a baseline for all future work, including the inevitability of this repeat Atlas. In the intervening period, however, techniques of fieldwork and, in particular, analysis of the data have taken great strides. More rigorous methods of both have been employed to ensure that the state of our knowledge of breeding birds in Britain has moved forwards, providing new baselines as well as comparisons with the past. The need to quantify and standardise observer effort was the most important element in devising the new survey methodology. This gives the new Atlas the tremendous advantage, denied the first one, of being repeatable in every parameter, so that, in future, changes in both distribution *and* density will be capable of proper assessment.

The introductory chapter is quite brief, dealing with the methodology and rationale behind it, and describing how the data were handled and the maps produced. It deserves, though, very careful reading, as it contains a number of important statements concerning differences between the two Atlases.

Each species account is given a two-page spread (and wide pages at that), containing usually three maps, showing distribution, abundance and change, together with a table of comparisons between old and new Atlases, and a text of 600-1,000 words. A small number of very scarce species have just a distribution map and a short text, and are grouped at the end. The texts are written by a great many authors (almost every species expert one can think of has contributed, myself included), and have been carefully edited, by Bob Spencer, into a coherent whole.

The distribution maps have only two dot sizes instead of the more familiar three. The 'confirmed' and 'probable' categories of the old Atlas have been amalgamated here, though it is necessary to read the introductory chapter to discover some important changes in the criteria used to allocate records. The abundance maps, the most obvious addition to this Atlas, are visually striking and instantly informative, with 11 graded colours.

The change map uses solid dots to indicate squares where birds were found in the new Atlas survey but not in the old, and open circles the reverse. In map after map, the open circles easily outnumber the solid dots. It is tempting, therefore, to make the snap judgment that a majority of species have contracted their range, especially in Ireland. This is, however, where one must reread the Introduction, because it reveals that coverage in Ireland, unlike that in Britain, was not comparable with the first Atlas. The Introduction also acknowledges that fieldwork during the strict two hours permitted in each tetrad was less likely to reveal the more elusive species—for example Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*—than that using the earlier method of spending as long as one considered necessary in each 10-km square.

Three concluding chapters deal with the Key Squares Survey, population estimates and status changes. The first, a 'survey within a survey', whereby a sample of tetrads (2×2 km squares) in a sample of 10-km squares was subjected to an even more rigorous field technique of timed visits and point counts, has proved very important in estimating bias in the full survey and in enabling national population estimates to be calculated for a number of species. There are additional abundance maps for 20 of the commoner species compiled from the Key Squares Survey data, though not cross-referenced to the species accounts. The visual differences between the two maps for some species are surprisingly large.

Population estimates are provided for every species, based on all sources, not just the Atlas, and tabulated separately for Britain and for Ireland. The changing status of our breeding birds as between the two Atlases, analysing them by habitats, makes for revealing reading. Only four species of birds nesting or feeding on farmland have shown an increase in range, compared with no fewer than 24 which have declined. On the other hand, 21 species which frequent lowland wetland have spread, and 14 contracted, though I find it depressing that seven of the former are wildfowl that have either been introduced or have had their spread encouraged by man, or both. It was in this chapter that I found the sole error to attract my attention. Contrary to what is stated, Little Gulls *Larus minutus* bred in Britain during the Atlas period, in 1988 and again in 1991.

In the short time that I have had this book, I have already consulted it for information on many occasions and expect it to be an invaluable reference work for many years to come. The facts, the figures and the maps are beautifully presented. Everyone associated with the book is entitled to feel proud. I cannot do more than close with the exhortation to every reader of this review to buy this book. You will not regret it.

MALCOLM OGILVIE

All the Bird Songs of Britain and Europe. By Jean C. Roché. Wildsounds, Holt, 1993. ISBN 1-898665-77-X. Cassettes vols. 1-4: £29.95 for full set. Compact discs vols. 1-4: £12.99 per vol.

Previously reviewed as *Tous les Oiseaux d'Europe* (*Brit. Birds* 84: 215), this edition is 'the first full English version' of the 1991 release, meaning that the accompanying booklets are now wholly in English text.

The choice between CD and cassette will be largely personal. Whilst the cassette version covers 415 species, four races and a hybrid, the CDs are restricted to 396 because of technical limitations of having a maximum of 99 tracks per CD. The CDs lose for instance Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*, Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* and Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*. Track length varies from Great Tit *Parus major*, a worthwhile three minutes, to Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, at 16 seconds. The tracks on the CDs are unannounced, whilst a very monotone voice introduces each cassette track.

On the negative side, my main comment, apart from the irritating misnomer of the title, is that the information in the booklets is still too limited, and most importantly gives no mention of background songs and calls of species other than the subject, confusing for the beginner.

Just as we might choose favourite plates in a field guide, however, so was I won over by, particularly, the weird and fantastic sounds of Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, the Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* with a Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* responding in the background, and the Great Bustard *Otis tarda* doing its best to imitate a whoopee cushion. Wonderful stuff!

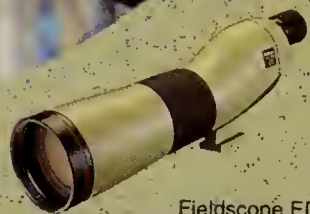
As regards the cost, consider what you spend on field guides. The full CD set is equivalent to, say, two books, and the cassettes to just one. In that context, they are great value. Modern field guides are geared towards what the modern birder needs, but the same thought has yet to be applied to sound guides. Although most of the frustrating 'flyover jobs' on Blakeney Point or in Scilly will be found hidden somewhere here, where is the Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, the Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* or the Dusky Warbler *P. fusca*, which so often betrays its presence by its call? So, while we wait for a condensed audio guide to 'rare' species to go with our equivalent field guides, I recommend this Jean C. Roché compilation to you.

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Invasion of Red-footed Falcons in spring 1992



Barry Nightingale and Keith Allsopp

During 1992, a total of 120 Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* was recorded in Britain and Ireland, with the vast majority occurring in the second half of May and June. This was by far the best year for this species in Britain, and compares with an average of about 11 per year during the period 1958-91.

The main arrival dates were 14th May (ten), 28th May (seven) and 29th May (12). We estimate that the peak population was present during the period from 23rd May to 13th June, with as many as 26 in Britain on 29th May (see fig. 1).

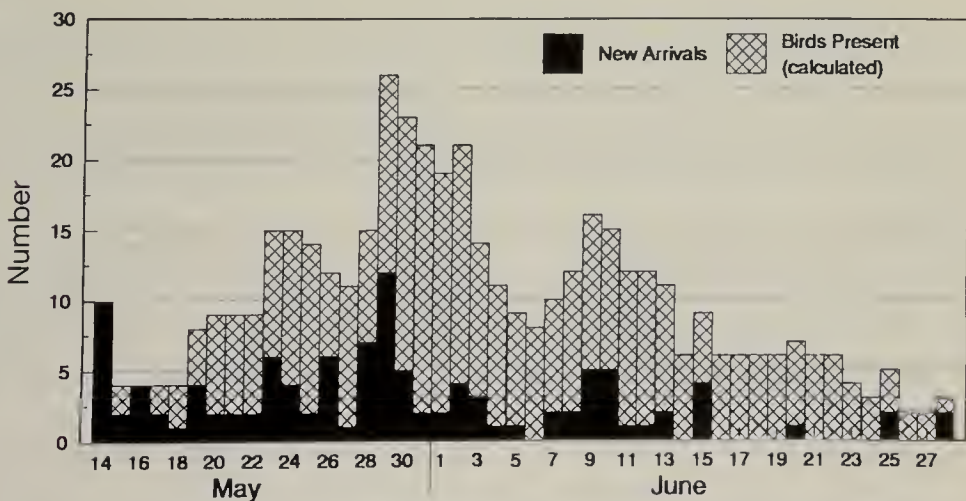


Fig. 1. Pattern of daily occurrence of Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* in Britain during 14th May to 28th June, with new arrivals shown in black and known or presumed repeat observations shown by cross-hatching. Note peak of 26 individuals (including 12 new) on 29th May

Sources of information

The records of 107 individuals in Britain and five in Ireland were extracted from the 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1992' (*Brit. Birds* 86: 447-540), with the following additions which were still in circulation to the Rarities Committee at the time of that report going to press:

BEDFORDSHIRE Thurleigh, ♀, 13th June.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE King's Ripton, ♀, 17th May. Wicken Fen, ♂, 26th May.

CLEVELAND Danby Beacon and Scaling Dam area, second-summer ♂, 14th-16th May. Teesmouth, ♀, 10th-12th June.

KENT Minnis Bay, first-summer ♂, 14th May.

NORFOLK Happisburgh, ♂, 30th May. Salthouse Heath, first-summer ♀, 15th May.

Subsequent analysis and follow-up also indicated that the adult male published as on the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) on 16th May was in the general area until the end of May, and was the same as that published as at Welney on 26th-31st May. Conversely, the adult female at Blakeney Point (Norfolk) was not the same as that at Cley (Norfolk) also on 14th May.

These changes bring the total for 1992 to 120, 112 of which arrived between 14th May and 28th June. It is likely, however, that many others went unobserved, or were not fully described as observers became almost accustomed to their appearance in some favoured areas.

Throughout, this account includes only the fully authenticated records assessed and accepted by the Rarities Committee; hearsay reports are ignored.

Invasion into Britain

The first arrival was a male at Cavenham Heath (Suffolk) on 21st-22nd April, followed by a female at Winterton (Norfolk) on 26th April. Remarkably, the next were five at Ballyconnelly (Co. Galway) on 28th April, which almost doubled the previous Irish total of seven individuals (all but one since 1966). None of these records is, however, considered to be part of the main influx and they are therefore excluded from the following analysis and the maps.

The first, and dramatic, indication that a major movement was under way in Britain came with the simultaneous arrival of ten individuals on 14th May, with six in Norfolk, two in Kent and one each in Cleveland and Suffolk. Six more followed in the next two days. With the exception of one in Wiltshire, all were in the eastern counties of England (fig. 2).

During the next week, 19 more were found, with a bias towards the south and southwest coasts of England (fig. 3); there were no more arrivals in Norfolk until 28th May. This perhaps suggests that the 'arrivals' during 17th-23rd May were indeed earlier East Coast arrivals which had continued to move west.

During 24th-30th May, another major surge took place, clearly new individuals this time, with 37 reported, including 12 on 29th alone. Of these, the majority were on the English coast, but the first arrivals were also noted in Scotland, with an adult in Highland on 29th May, and seven in the Northern Isles (fig. 4).

Again, there was a marked absence of new reports along the East Coast during the period 31st May to 6th June, with seven of the 13 records from south of a line between the River Severn and the River Thames (fig. 5). This indicates that either entry into Britain was on a very broad front along both the southern and the eastern coasts, or those arriving on the east coasts moved

14th-16th May

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 7



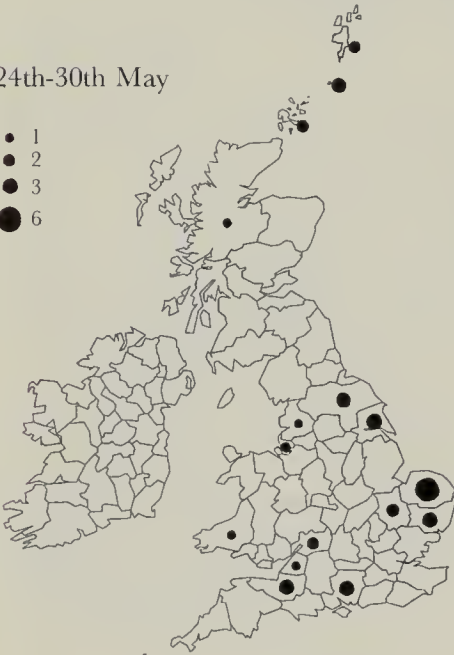
17th-23rd May

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 7



24th-30th May

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 6



31st May to 6th June

- 1
- 2



7th-13th June

- 1
- 2
- 3



Figs. 2-6. County-by-county distribution of newly arrived Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* during five phases of spring 1993 influx

rapidly west. Analysis shows that those individuals staying more than four days in one locality were mostly towards southwest England, the northerly counties of England, and Scotland, with relatively few in Norfolk, Suffolk and Kent.

The date 6th June was notable as the first since 14th May for which there were no new reports. During 7th-13th June, however, 18 more were found, nearly all from the eastern half of Britain (fig. 6). After four more on 15th June, reports of new arrivals dropped dramatically, with just five during 20th-28th June.

Analysis

The majority of the Red-footed Falcons occurred south of a line from the Wash to the Severn, with 72% of the records from that area (fig. 7). Curiously, the eastern coastal counties of Lincolnshire and Essex managed only one spring record between them, an identical situation to that in the previous highest influx, in 1973, when about 40 were seen in the spring (fig. 8).



Fig. 7. County-by-county distribution of Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* during 14th May to 28th June 1992



Fig. 8. County-by-county distribution of Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* during influx in spring 1973

Conversely, less than one-third were seen in the western half of Britain, so the 1992 influx had a distinct southeastern bias, although there were 13 reported from Scotland, including 11 from the Northern Isles.

The distributions of males and females were, remarkably, identical, with again 72% of both sexes in the southern half of Britain, although there was a higher proportion of males in the southwest (figs. 9 & 10). In 1973, spring females outnumbered males, but in 1992 the split was about equal, with 57 males and 55 females. Again in contrast to 1973, when most females arrived earlier than males, 50% of the males had arrived by 26th May, compared with only 35% of the females.

Whilst some duplication must have occurred, with 'new' birds at one site having previously been reported from another site, perhaps in a different county, this was probably more than compensated for by other individuals



Figs. 9 & 10. County-by-county distribution of male (left) and female (right) Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* during 14th May to 28th June 1992

overlooked or dismissed as repeat sightings of an earlier individual. The actual total in Britain and Ireland was probably close to the official total of 120.

Photographs of many of these spring 1992 Red-footed Falcons in Britain were published with the Rarities Committee's report (*Brit. Birds* 86: 447-540). One of the Dutch birds is featured in plates 68 & 69.

Invasion into Continental Europe and Scandinavia

The picture in Britain was mirrored to a large extent in countries bordering the North Sea (Anon. 1993). Denmark had its largest-ever influx, with 425-610 at Skagen (North Jutland) during May and June, and about 150 in the rest of Denmark. Curiously, numbers in western Sweden were unremarkable, but in other parts of Sweden 1992 was a very good year, with about 104 during May and June, and was the second-best in recent decades (155 were recorded in 1981). In neighbouring Norway, there were four spring records, on 13th and 29th May, and two in June, but this was not exceptional. An adult male also reached Iceland on 11th June, which was only the fourth Icelandic record.

There were 60 spring reports from France, which was fewer than in 1990, but in the Netherlands there was an influx of about 450 during the second half of May. A glance at fig. 11 shows clearly that those countries to the east of Britain enjoyed an equally exciting experience to ours. It does not always follow, however, that when large numbers occur on the Continent we see the same in Britain. Indeed, in 1988, when Denmark (with 150), the Netherlands (with 100), Sweden (with 50 in May) and Germany all had good numbers, it was a notably poor year in Britain, with only five in spring. May and June that year were, however, relatively cool in Britain. (Unfortunately, no information is available at present concerning numbers in Germany in 1992.)

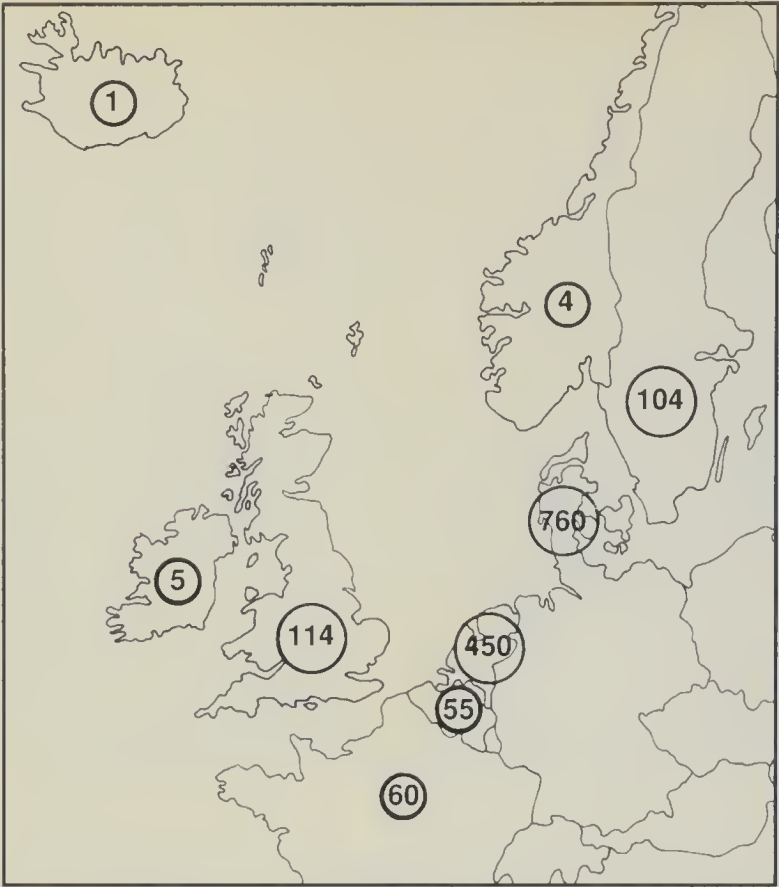


Fig. 11. Numbers of Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* reported during spring 1992 in Northwest European countries. No information was received from Germany

The weather

During 13th-16th May, the atmospheric circulation pattern changed dramatically. Previously, the easterly jet-stream across the Atlantic, marking the sharp boundary between the cold polar air and the subtropical air, crossed the British Isles and Western Europe, bringing unsettled westerly weather as the

68. Second-summer male Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Netherlands, May 1992 (Karel Mauer)





69. Second-summer male Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Netherlands, May 1992
(Karel Mauer)

air masses mixed together. The jet-stream then shifted northwards to cross over northern Norway, and in doing so dragged the hotter subtropical air over eastern England and Western Europe to form a warm anticyclonic block. The northerly flow was most intense on 14th and 15th May, coincident with the start of the influx of Red-footed Falcons into Britain, with hot air being pulled northwards from southern Iberia. A centre of high pressure became established over Scandinavia, and the warm air was constantly fed across the North Sea in the lower atmosphere across the eastern seaboard of England and Scotland throughout the remainder of the month. This resulted in the warmest May this century in many areas. Farther east, a low-pressure area to the north of the Black Sea extended the westerly flow of air across Baltic Sea areas from eastern Europe. The warm anticyclonic weather continued into June as the jet-stream remained in the north with the warm-air anticyclones forming a ridge from Norway southwestwards into the Atlantic, with persistent easterlies on its southern flank. June temperatures were the warmest since 1976.

Associated species

As might be expected with such weather conditions, Red-footed Falcons were not the only species to arrive in unusual numbers during spring 1992 (Nightingale & Allsopp 1992). About 100 Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* arrived in the second half of May and six Red-throated Pipits *Anthus cervinus* came on

14th-15th May, with another 23 by the end of the month. In parallel, there was an influx of Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* of the grey-headed race *thunbergi*, which breeds from central and northern Fennoscandia eastwards. Up to ten were at Cley on 14th, 20 at Happisburgh (Norfolk) on 15th, and seven on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 29th May. Black-headed Buntings *Emberiza melanocephala*, Woodchat Shrikes *Lanius senator* and European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* also arrived in unusual numbers at this time (Rogers *et al.* 1993).

Normal breeding range and movements

The entire population of Red-footed Falcons winters in southern Africa. Passage occurs on broad fronts. The spring exodus lies significantly to the west, when considerable numbers move north through West Africa and cross the Mediterranean from Algeria eastwards. Return movements start in early March, crossing the Mediterranean from mid April to mid May. Central European and Ukrainian breeding populations are back on territory from mid April, the Central Russian population by late April or early May, and more northerly and easterly breeding areas are repopulated during the first, or even second, half of May.

Breeding takes place in Slovakia, Hungary, Austria, Lithuania and European Russia eastwards to central Asia.

Discussion

Falcons rarely use thermals during migration. Close examination of the weather maps clearly demonstrates, however, that the Red-footed Falcon appearances in northern Europe during 1992 ebbed and flowed as warm air masses moved around.

On 12th May, temperatures over Iberia and northern Europe were fairly normal, with no strong airflows. On 13th, an influx of warm air, measured at 1,500 m, extended from the south over much of Britain. By 14th May, temperatures were up to 17°C at 1,500 m, with winds over 30 knots extending up the southern coast of Norway. This coincided with the big, multiple arrival of falcons on the east coast of England.

During 20th-22nd May, the warm air mass retreated, and extended only over the southern half of Britain. It was in this second phase that new arrivals were entirely restricted to southern parts of England, and in total were rather few. From 23rd May, the warm air approached more from the east and Scandinavia, bringing six new arrivals, five of which were in Kent. During 26th-30th May, six more made landfall on the northeast coast of England, at what was the peak time for this region.

On 28th and 30th May, the ground temperatures at four weather stations in Scotland were new station-records for May (per Royal Meteorological Society), these high temperatures coinciding with the arrival of five Red-footed Falcons in Scotland, the peak period there. Then, as cooler weather returned on 31st May, the incidence of new reports fell away. This situation was to remain until 9th June, when temperatures rose again, and when 24°C in Shetland was a June record for those islands. Five new arrivals were reported on that day.

On 15th June, temperatures again rose, and both Heathrow and Gatwick recorded 28°C, on a day when four new falcons arrived in southeast England. This was to be the last large influx.

It is likely that, as temperatures rose, so did aerial insect activity. It is interesting to note that the warm, dry weather in May encouraged spring species of dragonfly, a principal food source for the falcons, to be in greater abundance than for many years (*Odonata Recording Scheme Newsletter*, Monks Wood, June 1993).

It is probable, therefore, that the Red-footed Falcons—those wonderful avian predators—were merely following their food source around, once they themselves had been displaced over Northern Europe, remaining longest where appropriate food was most plentiful.

Acknowledgments

We should like to thank Mike Rogers for following up and supplying details of late reports submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee; and Stephen Cham for supplying information on dragonfly populations. Additional European news was supplied by Andrew W. Clarke for Norway, René-Marie Lafontaine for Belgium, Gunnlaugur Pétursson for Iceland, and Tommy Tyrberg for Sweden.

Summary

The 120 authenticated records of Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* in Britain and Ireland in 1992 was the highest-ever annual total. Only five in Ireland and two in Britain in April and one in Britain in August were outside the six-week period from 14th May to 28th June, when 112 occurred in Britain. The meteorological situation was unusual and the occurrences of the falcons coincided with periods of exceptionally warm weather, which were also favourable for aerial insects such as dragonflies, which form important prey for the falcons. Influxes of Red-footed Falcons also occurred in neighbouring areas of the Continent, especially in Denmark and the Netherlands (fig. 11).

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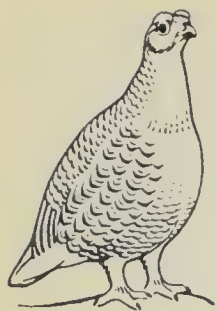
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A paper by Brian Small on the identification of Red-footed Falcons and separation from various confusion species will be published shortly. EDS



The inclusion of plates 68 & 69 in colour within this paper has been subsidised by Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd, sponsors of the British Birds Rarities Committee



Notes

Hen Harrier laying clutch while still building nest On 11th May 1987, on a moor in Perthshire, Tayside, I flushed a female Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* from a single egg lying in a depression in the heather *Calluna vulgaris* surrounded by a few pieces of heather and rush *Juncus* (plate 70); the egg was warm, and I marked it with a felt pen (for security reasons). On 8th June, I checked the site with M. Reid and was surprised to find a substantial nest containing five eggs, including the marked one (plate 71), one of which was cracked, with a broken egg lying outside the nest. On 19th June, the nest held one small young, the marked egg plus two others, and a broken egg; and, on 11th July, one large young and two eggs, with a broken egg outside.

Hen Harrier nests can show great variation, both in size and in the time taken to construct them, and females add material throughout the nesting period (Watson, 1977, *The Hen Harrier*, & *in litt.*). These Hen Harriers must have built the nest during the laying period. The material was at least 10 cm deep at the cup, and it is perhaps not surprising that most of the eggs broke or failed to hatch. On 30th April, about 600 m away, I had watched an adult male and a female Hen Harrier nest-prospecting, food-passing and copulating, but nothing further developed there; it is likely that this pair moved to the new site, possibly owing to disturbance (see Watson 1977, p. 120). A. D. Watson (*in litt.*) has also suggested that the female may have been a first-year and, therefore, inexperienced.

These observations were made while I was on contract to the RSPB.

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Hen Harrier hunting by 'hedge-hopping' The hunting behaviour known as 'hedge-hopping', in which a bird flies along a hedge or fence, switching from one side to the other in the hope of surprising prey, is well known for certain raptors (e.g. Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*), but has not apparently been described for the Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* (e.g. Schipper 1973; Schipper *et al.* 1975; Brown 1976; Watson 1977; Cramp & Simmons 1980; A. D. Watson verbally).

On 7th April 1990, on a road crossing high moorland in the south of the Isle of Man, I watched an adult male Hen Harrier hunting along an earth bank 1-1.5 m high, averaging 0.5 m across, and covered in dense vegetation. There was an overgrown verge 1-2 m wide on the roadward side and moorland with heather *Calluna vulgaris* on the other. The harrier flew very slowly into the wind at a height of 1-2 m, every few metres switching from one



70 & 71. Nest of Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Tayside, summer 1987: insubstantial nest with one egg on 11th May (above) and far more substantial nest with five eggs on 8th June (below) (Graham W. Rebecca)



side of the bank to the other. It took no notice of me or of several vehicles, although twice cars passing within about 1 m of its wingtip caused it to veer off for a few metres across the bank before returning to hunt along it. After several hundred metres, the harrier pounced on prey in the overgrown verge; it ate this, and resumed hunting along the bank. It covered about 1.2 km before coming to some people by parked cars, where it crossed the road and continued to hunt over the moorland. The entire distance, excluding diversions, was covered at perhaps an average speed of 8-10 km per hour, although, with the constant weaving and sideslipping, the actual flying speed would have been greater. From the way the harrier used the wind to hold up its forward speed, it may be presumed that such low speeds are optimal for prey-detection in such coarse vegetation, even though higher speeds must greatly enhance the potential for surprising prey. JOHN P. THORPE

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Sunning behaviour of juvenile Pied Wagtails In my book *The Sunning Behaviour of Birds: a guide for ornithologists* (Simmons 1986), I was unable to include any personal or published records for the members of the wagtail family (Motacillidae), but only a single unpublished observation, by the late Bernard King, of a Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* exposing itself to the sun on the ground without adopting any special posture, this being the simplest level of sunning.

It was with considerable interest, therefore, that, from 11.40 to 11.50 GMT on 20th August 1991 (a particularly warm day), my wife and I observed three recently fledged Pied Wagtails *M. alba* adopting sunning postures on the bank of the River Wye at Hereford as we looked down on them from the parapet of the Old Bridge. The wagtails, all exposed to the full heat of the sun on a concreted area which sloped down to the water, were mainly loafing, but occasionally became active (chasing flies, stretching, preening); one, after being alerted by an airborne thistle seed, bathed briefly. It was noticeable that their tails were quite still as they rested, but immediately started to wag when movement of any sort was imminent. Once, a parent flew in with a billful of flies, causing a flurry of activity among the fledglings (including begging by one), but it left without feeding them; the young did not follow, but continued to loaf in the sun. More or less throughout the period of observation, two were sunning in what I have termed the 'wings-down' posture (sitting right down with wings dropped, so exposing the back), one for most of the time we were watching. The one which had bathed also adopted an upright sitting posture facing the sun, resting back on its tail, while the third sunned only in

this same attitude, quite immobile, again for most of the time. Both these sunning postures, the second of which was not previously known to me, were of what I have termed the 'level-2 type', no higher-intensity sunning being seen from any of these wagtails.

Subsequent to this observation, a colour photograph has been published of a White-browed Wagtail *M. maderaspatensis* sunning, in what I have termed the 'wing-folded lateral' posture (*Birdwatch* 1: 28). This represents a higher level of sunning than that demonstrated by the Pied Wagtails at Hereford.

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Feeding behaviour of Collared Flycatcher The behaviour of the male Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* at Lowestoft, Suffolk, described by B. J. Brown (*Brit. Birds* 82: 223-224), is in fact typical of this species in bad weather. It is well known in the Białowieża Forest, Poland, where this is one of the co-dominant species of the lime-oak-hornbeam *Tilia-Quercus-Carpinus* stands. When cold spells with rain and wind occur in April or early May, Collared Flycatchers always descend to the ground layer in the forest, and then become conspicuous while feeding close to the ground in the village itself (in a palace park). They are very tame and sluggish, with fluffed plumage, exactly as shown in plate 51 accompanying Mr Brown's note. In warm weather, however, they usually remain high up in the forest canopy and can barely be seen (usually, we record only their song or calls). It is remarkable how this species becomes invisible after the young fledged: Collared Flycatchers are not seen or heard in the forest during late June or July.

L. TOMIAŁOJC

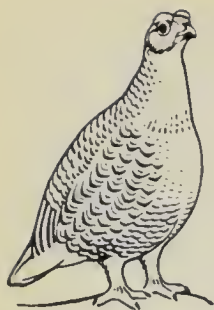
Wrocław University, Museum of Natural History, Sienkiewicza 21,
50-335 Wrocław, Poland

BWP (7: 53) mentions that ground-feeding by Collared Flycatchers increases in bad weather. As Dr C. J. Bibby has pointed out, the apparent disappearance of the young is also noted with Pied Flycatchers *F. hypoleuca* (see also *BWP* 7: 78). EDS

Coal Tit stealing and recaching food cached by Marsh Tits On 15th November 1990, at Handbridge, Chester, Cheshire, I disturbed a party of about 20 tits *Parus* which were foraging on beech mast *Fagus sylvatica*. A single Marsh Tit *P. palustris* was the first to reappear; as I watched, it located, removed and cached the mast at a rate of about four or five nuts per minute, travelling only 3-6 m in order to do so. After a further two minutes, many tits had returned to the site, and I noticed that one particular Coal Tit *P. ater* took to following the Marsh Tit during each each sortie. At the site of the cache, the Coal Tit alighted and watched from a distance of 30-60 cm, where it was apparently ignored by the Marsh Tit. On the latter's departure, the Coal Tit swiftly and deftly both removed and recached the nut only 30-60 cm away, before flying back to the mast and relocating the Marsh Tit. After seven instances of consecutive pilfering and recaching, however, the Coal Tit returned to the mast a little too late and was duped into following a second Marsh Tit, which it treated in exactly the same manner as it had the first (which was now feeding in nearby bushes).

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Letters

Ageing of a King Eider Pete Ellis has commented (*in litt.*), concerning the King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* shown in plate 13, that his Note took account of a written description of the bill as 'yellow-orange' but that, 'given the bright red bill, this bird is probably at least a second-summer moulting to a third-winter and could well be even older.'

Mr Ellis's earlier comments (*Brit. Birds* 87: 36-37) were based on the previously published black-and-white photographs (80: plates 326 & 327), which we originally intended to republish with his Note. We found, however, just prior to publication, that Dr R. J. Chandler had transparencies of the same individual eiders (though in different poses), so we substituted these, believing it to be useful to show the birds in colour.

It was our error, for which we apologise, that Mr Ellis did not see the colour transparencies of plates 12 and 13 prior to publication. EDS

Large raptors at Cape Clear I am inclined to agree with the first paragraph of Dr E. F. J. Garcia's letter (*Brit. Birds* 86: 92) on the identification of the five large eagle-like birds off Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 1st September 1965. To add to the speculation, it may also be of interest to place on record the local meteorological conditions at the time of, and prior to, this remarkable sighting.

A polar maritime airmass had prevailed for much of the period since 28th August, during which time thermals existed both over the sea and over land from the surface to between 1,600 m and 2,200 m, although latterly the establishment of a ridge of high pressure reduced this depth to 900 m. Oversea thermals are normally, however, not sufficiently well organised for large soaring birds, and, in any case, the birds were moving steadily in a general westward direction low over the sea with a slow and very laborious flapping flight. The local surface wind was almost calm, and the sea was mirror-like.

Although sea and surface wind conditions off Cape Clear Island may have been slight at the time of, and prior to, the observation, atmospheric soundings at Valentia Observatory (75 km northwest of Cape Clear) over the previous 24 hours showed winds aloft (at 1,000 m) to have been north to northwest force 4-6. One can infer from this that, away from the shelter of the southern Irish coast, the surface wind over the open sea would have been northwesterly and stronger than that observed at Cape Clear. Indeed, this was the case behind a cold front which was moving slowly south over Biscay at the time. To the south of this front, the winds were light in a ridge of high pressure.

The possibility of Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* climbing in thermals over

their nearest breeding grounds in northern Spain, and then drifting 1,000 km over the sea NNW to Ireland stretches the imagination, whatever the winds. Even from an altitude of 3,000 m, a bird with a soar/glide ratio of 12:1 would reach the surface within 40 km, so most of the long flight would have been at very low level. A very approximate airspeed of 30 kph can be calculated from the original observations at Cape Clear (Dr J. T. R. Sharrock *in litt.*), from which one can infer well over a day's continuous flapping flight with little or no assistance, partly at night, and through the cold front; could birds such as Griffon Vultures sustain such a flight? Watching large raptors exhausted after crossing even the narrow Strait of Gibraltar casts doubt in my mind regarding the feasibility of such an undertaking.

It is difficult to offer an alternative explanation to those already proposed, but in my opinion the birds' departure from land must have been very much closer. They could have drifted along the Atlantic coast of France, but this would still mean a 500-km sea-crossing. White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* certainly seem to be the only other possible contenders, but, even then, their origin is likely to remain a mystery, as is their fate.

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A popularised account of the observations on 1st September 1965 was published recently in the magazine *Birdwatch* (no. 15, pages 62-63) with an invitation to readers to comment on the identification. Several comments were received (verbally), all agreeing with the Griffon Vulture theory and none offering any alternative suggestion (D. Mitchell *in litt.*). EDS

Identification of Black Wheatear in flight I was interested to read the note by Magnus Ullman (*Brit. Birds* 86: 185) pointing out that a slightly paler 'panel' along the base of the inner primaries and outer secondaries is apparently visible in flight. Surely, the reason why Black Wheatears *Oenanthe leucura* are easy to identify in flight is that the flight feathers are dark brown (and not uniformly black as on White-crowned Black Wheatear *O. leucopyga*), and contrast with the black plumage of the body and wing-coverts? Since the flight feathers are always browner on Black Wheatear, this pale panel is more than likely to be lost or overlooked amongst the more obvious field characters. Whilst the paper on wheatear identification (*Brit. Birds* 80: 137-157, 187-238) may have overlooked this small or slight panel, it did emphasise the plumage of the flight feathers as a whole in determining the differences between Black and White-crowned Black Wheatears.

PETER CLEMENT

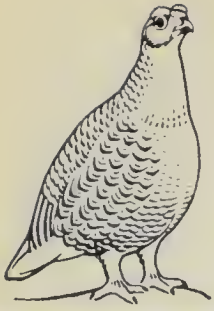
69 Harecroft Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 1RL

Shrikes pursuing other birds The note by Alan Harris concerning a Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* pursuing a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* (*Brit. Birds* 87: 42) recalls the observations by R. Meinertzhagen (1959, *Pirates and Predators*): 'I have seen in Kenya the lesser grey shrike [*L. minor*] chase a wheatear [*Oenanthe*] until it dropped a beetle, and in Egypt the woodchat will commonly chase small birds in possession of an insect.'

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This piratical behaviour by shrikes is not unusual, but instances relating to any pursued species larger than a Hoopoe would be of interest. EDS



A conservation strategy for Ireland's birds

THE IRISH WILDBIRD CONSERVANCY, in conjunction with the Irish government's Office of Public Works and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, has produced a Conservation Strategy for Birds in Ireland. This follows on from the RSPB's Strategy for the UK, focusing on the most-threatened species and their relationships to various habitat types.

The similarities between the two documents are many, but the conclusions are slightly different, as is to be expected when the geographical unit of Ireland is divorced from Great Britain. This also puts Northern Ireland in the unique position of having two strategies (UK and Ireland) which have to be dovetailed together!

The twelve most-threatened breeding species are Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*, Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, Corn Crake *Crex crex*, European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Roscate Tern *Sterna dougallii*, Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*. This assessment omits sporadic breeding species such as Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* and Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*, which are under threat only through rarity. The five most-threatened habitats for breeding birds are lowland wet grassland, machair, bogs, fens and waterside vegetation and non-intensive grassland. Other habitats, such as turloughs, are highly threatened, but do not have the ornithological importance to bring them into the list of priorities.

The document also clearly highlights the importance of Ireland's Red-billed Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, wintering waterfowl and breeding seabirds, as well as threats to habitats for wintering birds, such as intertidal flats, salt-marsh and other coastal regions. (Contributed by Dave Allen)

Project Halmahera

This year, the *In Focus* County Bird Race and the British Birdwatching Fair are both raising money for BirdLife International's Project Halmahera. Halmahera, a small island in Indonesia, is one of the top world bird-conservation priorities. About the size of East Anglia, together with a few small nearby islands, it is home to an almost unbelievable 26 species of birds that are found nowhere else in the world. If the forest here goes, so do 26 bird species, lost to the world for ever.

BirdLife International is working with the Indonesian Government to set up two protected areas on Halmahera – although the authorities are keen to do this, they lack sufficient resources. Project Halmahera is an opportunity for British birders to make a fantastic contribution to the conservation of one of the world's true bird hot-spots.

This year's British Birdwatching Fair is being held at Rutland Water, on 19th-21st August.

Some new discoveries—spiders, birds and monkeys

In our never-ending search to bring you news of additions to various lists, be they British or world, here are some goodies for you:

New to Britain: *Coleosoma blandum*, a small tropical spider first described from a male specimen from Sri Lanka. Worldwide it is now located in such tropical areas as Malaysia and the Seychelles. In July 1993, however, in leaf litter beneath the oaks of Queen's Wood, Highgate, London, an adult female was trapped. There is little doubt that man has been closely associated with its new locality, but such niceties seem less important to arachnologists than to birders.

New to the World: *Xenoperdix udzungwensis*, not only a new species but a new genus as well. And it is a bird. Not established by some museum splitter, but discovered by a group of Danish ornithologists working in the montane

forest of Tanzania. What makes this partridge-like bird particularly interesting is its apparent relationship with similar species in Asia, rather than those of Africa.

New to the World: Two for the price of one—both primates and both from the tropical forests of Brazil. Both species have a very limited distribution and very little is known concerning either species. The Black-headed Marmoset *Callithrix nigriceps* has one of the smallest geographical ranges for any Amazonian monkey, and its future is most precarious. It is formally classified as 'endangered', as is the other new species, Ka'apor Capuchin *Cebus kaapori*. Present evidence is that this is the more widely distributed of the two species, and, indeed, may have been much more numerous before extensive deforestation.

Site designations in the balance

English Nature, one of the Government's nature conservation advisers, has proposed the designation of the Northumberland Shore and the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast as Special Protection Areas under the EC's Birds Directive. The Department of the Environment has received a number of objections from sea-anglers concerned about bait-digging, but no letters in support. At the time of writing, the date for comments has passed and the eventual outcome is, therefore, in the balance. We shall keep you informed.

Birding goes soft?

Many of us are old enough to remember the times when a visit to a bird observatory was a chilly experience, shivering through the night as the tilley lamps were pumped, and the evening meal was prepared on the primus stove. Oh, how things have changed! The latest news to reach us is that at Dungeness Bird Observatory, Kent, not only are the shower, freezer, washing-machine, electric stoves and similar equipment well in place, but central heating is now added. Will there be any mid-winter birding from now on?

Nightjar news

Vaurie's Nightjar *Caprimulgus centralasicus* was known only from a single specimen taken in western China in 1929. Then came the news, not known to the Western world until 1993, that 'several' specimens had been collected by Chinese ornithologists from Beijing University in 1975, the collection site being only some 250 km from the original record. News has, unfortunately, just been passed on that the specimens in fact refer to the European Nightjar *C. europaeus*—so it is back to being the rarest of all, just a single record.

Good news, however, of another nightjar, Satanic Eared-nightjar *Eurostopodus diabolicus*. Confined to the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, the species had not been seen since 1931. Now comes news that members of a *KingBird Tour* have seen what may well have been this species in the Lore Lindu National Park.

New warden for Cape Clear

Although bird observatories in general have experienced a trough in terms of visitor numbers, interest in the Republic's only bird observatory remains strong. Perhaps it is the renowned social scene and the friendliness of the islanders that brings birders back, though we suspect that Cape's record for seabird passage and October rarities has an effect.

The Council of CCBO is delighted to appoint Alan D'Alton as Warden for the 1994 season. Alan has been a regular visitor to Cape since his teenage days and is particularly interested in sketching the island's avifauna during his stay—he was formerly employed as a graphic artist in his native Dublin. For information on bookings write to K. Grace, 84 Dorney Court, Shankill, Co. Dublin.

(Contributed by Oran O'Sullivan)

Bluebirds over . . .

A splendid little leaflet entitled 'Birdwatching in White Cliffs Country', written by Pete Findley and illustrated by John Hollyer, tells you where to go birdwatching in the Dover area. For a copy, telephone the White Cliffs Countryside Project on Dover (0304) 241806.

New date for OBC meeting

The Oriental Bird Club's Manchester meeting will take place on 18th June (not 25th June), at the United Reform Church, Elm Road, Gatley, near Manchester. Details from the Meetings Officer, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Weather service for ornithologists

When is just the right time to head for the east coast, or St Ives Bay, or Dungeness? We all know just what a critical part the weather plays in what birds will be where and when. A new service, introduced by Telephone Information & Services and the Meteorological Office, may well help plan the weekend's venue. The new system is called 'Weathercall Fax', but to take part you need ready access to a fax machine. Set up with this extra piece of technology (one presumes you already have a telephone, pager and assorted electronic gadgetry), a simple call will deliver to your fax machine a hard copy of charts, satellite pic-

tures and full explanatory text for 'all bird enthusiasts'. Different numbers will give you satellite images, national weather situation, or a five-day outlook (either nationally or in one of seven regions). The calls are charged at 36p per minute cheap rate and 48p per minute at other times. A satellite image, with very fine detail, takes some six minutes to be transmitted—some £3.00 a time. It is an interesting idea, but somehow we cannot believe that birders will be the major users of the system. Perhaps we shall be proved wrong? Further information from TIS, London (071) 975-9000.

Stanley Cramp

Stanley Cramp, who died in 1987, was acknowledged as having devoted a lifetime to ornithology (*Brit. Birds* 85: 387-414) with a close association with this monthly journal. Further acknowledgment to Stanley now exists in a newly described subspecies of the Fan-tailed Raven *Corvus rhipidurus stanleyi* (*Dutch Birding* 15: 258-262). The author, C. S. Roselaar, states 'The new subspecies is named in honour of Stanley Cramp, OBE (1913-87), initiator of *BWP*. Stanley had a strong interest in both crows and the Middle East. Without his stimulating correspondence throughout the first five volumes, the handbook would never have reached its present status.'

Seabirds in Iberia

Apparently the final count for the number of breeding pairs of Audouin's Gulls *Larus audouinii* in the Ebro Delta colony, Spain, in 1993, was a staggering 9,360. Andy Paterson tells us that this, and lots more data on the status of Iberian seabirds, will be published in May 1994. The book, entitled 'Aves marinas de Iberia, Baleares y Canarias', will be in Spanish, but with extra-long English summaries and in a format that will be easily understood. In addition to the information on status, the book includes an introduction by Bill Bourne and details of all the rare seabirds in Iberia and the island groups.

More on those gulls

Herring *Larus argentatus*, Yellow-legged *L. cachinnans* and Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus* 'represent a superspecies. Our data imply that gene flow between the 3 gull species must be negligible and furthermore, that they represent rather young species which may have split 100 000-500 000 years ago. The recognition of *L. cachinnans* as a distinct species is supported by molecular evidence.' So say Michael Wink, Ute Kahl and Petra Heidrich (*J. Orn.* 135: 73-80).

Gone for ever

In the context of the impact of man on migratory birds, it is sobering to be reminded by Professor Peter Berthold (*Bird Migration*, 1993, reviewed on pages 220-221) of the current estimates that human influences will reduce the number of plant and animal species on Earth by between 50% and 90% over the next 100 years. Thus, even if *all* conservation measures are totally *successful*, half the world's current living species will be extinct before the year AD2100. God help us! (*JTRS*)

Biodiversity and sustainability

There was a time when the word 'Environment' was linked almost solely to wildlife and the countryside. It was associated with conservation organisations wishing to safeguard Britain's flora and fauna. Then, somehow or other, the word was hijacked. It began to be used for a wider meaning. It included, among other things, housing and roads, and eventually we were presented with the Department of the Environment.

Now the discussion is all biodiversity and sustainability. The voluntary conservation sector (including, among others, Friends of the Earth, RSNC, RSPB and WWF) has produced a document entitled 'Biodiversity Challenge—an agenda for conservation in the UK'. This was followed by no fewer than four documents from the Department of the Environment: 'Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy'; 'Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan'; 'Climate Change: The UK Programme'; and 'Sustainable Forestry: The UK Programme.' Lots of words running to hundreds of pages. Let us hope that it is more

than just words, and that clear action follows in the months ahead. For those of you with a little spare reading time, 'Biodiversity Challenge' is available from the Biodiversity Challenge Group, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL; summaries of the DoE Strategy are available from DoE, PO Box 151, London E15 2HF. The full document (Cm 2426) is available from HMSO bookshops at £22.00.

Flicking through these various publications can be quite fascinating. There are stated targets for a whole range of bird species, including increasing Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* to at least 80 pairs within 10 years, and maintaining both the Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* and Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* as UK breeding species. The one we really like appears under 'Coleoptera' (beetles): '*Aghyptinus agathidioides* (a beetle) An endemic British species known only from one male and one female collected from a Moorhen's *Gallinula chloropus* nest in Potter's Bar, Hertfordshire, on 14th April 1912. Clarify true world status and protect if rediscovered.'

BTO membership soars

Having enrolled over 1,300 new members in 1993, the BTO is poised to recruit its 10,000th member in 1994. If you are not a member, then now is a good time to join. Thanks to the generosity of *Leica Camera UK*, a £700 pair of *Leica* binoculars will be presented to the lucky new member who is number 10,000. If you should be unlucky enough to be number 9,999 or 10,001, there is still a good deal to be had. Basic membership costs £19.00; pay by Direct Debit and get a £3.00 discount plus vouchers worth £15.00 against books and bird-sound recordings: total cost, £1.00. Full details from Sue Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*(!), BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

Twitchers to become criminals?

It may just have escaped your notice, but the 'Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill', currently going through Parliament, has a section entitled 'Collective Trespass or Nuisance on Land'. This is intended to combat problems such as new-age travellers and hunt saboteurs. It does, however, give powers to the police to remove trespassers if 'two or more persons' are involved, and, if they fail to leave, or return again within three(!) months, they are liable for a term of imprisonment. Now, we are not suggesting for one minute that this will present any problem to the well-behaved birder, but if a landowner had a 'mega' on his property, and was particularly unhelpful, then . . .

Messina's illegal hunting

The Strait of Messina is a key route for bird migration from Africa to Europe, together with the Bosphorus and the Strait of Gibraltar. Thousands of birds of prey and hundreds of storks are concentrated in this area each year. In spring 1993, more than 25,000 birds of 29 species were counted, including 5,000 Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* in one day. Unfortunately, there is also intense poaching activity. In past years, WWF registered more than 1,000 shots and 50 birds of prey killed in a day.

In the last 13 years, special observation camps have been organised, helping to halt illegal hunting and taking a census of the migrating birds. This year the camp will be managed by WWF Italy, along the Sicilian side of the Strait of Messina, from 2nd April to 28th May. To participate and receive more information about 'Spring in the Strait' activity, please contact WWF Italy—Camps Office, Via Donatello, 5/B, 20100 Milano, Italy; telephone 02-29.40.42.60.

Cull of Goosanders and Cormorants on the Welsh border

Licences issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, for shooting Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* and Goosanders *Mergus merganser* on the river Wye, are the latest in a series issued elsewhere, e.g. in Cumbria and the Yorkshire Dales. In 1988, the MAFF was advised that the adoption of management tactics to alleviate the 'problem' (of Great Cormorants at fish farms and inland waters) is a much more promising line to take than an attempt to kill birds. A lack of information exists on the effect of shooting on Great

Cormorant numbers and behaviour, and on the output of fish. If there is a continuous turnover of Great Cormorants on any water, then birds that are scared away or shot would be rapidly replaced by immigrants, rendering attempted control ineffective.

Would that the MAFF adopted the view of the government in the Netherlands (where angling waters are public) that birds have as much right to feed in the waters as anglers to fish. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

Two tasks for the YOC in May

In the close fishing season, the YOC and the National Federation of Anglers will be asking young conservationists and anglers to count Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* on their local river, lake or canal, and at the same time collect discarded fishing-line. Similar collections have taken place three times in the last 15 years. It will be interesting to learn if the situation has improved.

On 21st and 22nd May, thousands of youngsters will take part in 'Birdathon '94', seeing as many birds as possible in one day and raising money (the target is £25,000) to buy an extension to the RSPB's Surlingham Marsh reserve in Norfolk. Good luck to them.

Young ornithologists get older

The Announcement (page 199) that 'BB' is taking over the annual competition to find the Young Ornithologists of the Year will, we hope, be welcomed by readers and especially by the up-and-coming generation of 'real bird-watchers' (see *Brit. Birds* 87: 43).

The top age group is now 17-21, so the competition and title should now have greatly added status.

Do you know a good young birder who should be encouraged to enter this year? The rules are simple, and entering is even simpler (notebook + name + age + address + SAE). The prizes will, we hope (sponsor allowing), be well worth winning, too.

Honour for George Dunnet

Among the new Commanders of the Order of the British Empire in the New Year's Honours List was Professor G. M. Dunnet, Chairman of the Salmon Advisory Committee, for services to conservation, but best known to us for his work on Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*. Our warmest congratulations from all the 'BB' team.

Neotropical Bird Club off the ground

The inaugural meeting of the newly formed club membership at 350 will be held at Cley Village Hall, Norfolk, on 29th May. The proceedings start at 12 noon. Further details from David Wege on Cambridge (0223) 277318.

Forktail-Leica Award

Leica Camera UK is involved with an annual award from the Oriental Bird Club. The recent winner of the £1,000 award is J. C. Uttangi, who will be using the money to survey the birds of a little-known protected area of the Anshi National Park, India. The area is threatened by extensive forest clearance as part of a hydro-electric dam development. The information collected will, it is hoped, assist in the conservation of at least part of a genetically diverse semi-evergreen forest.

The annual award is given for projects based in the Orient and related to globally-threatened bird species. Further information from Melanie Heath, OBC Conservation Officer, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Pelagics in the Western Approaches

Departing from Penzance on the good ship *Chalice* will be a series of two-day pelagic birding trips out to the Western Approaches. Departure dates in 1991 are 5th, 7th, 9th,

12th, 14th, 16th, 19th, 21st and 23rd August and 9th September. Further details on Buxton (0298) 25513.

Additions to British & Irish List

Two species with records accepted by both the BBRC and the BOURC have been admitted to Category A of the British & Irish List in the latest BOURC report (*Ibis* 136: 253-256):

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* Three individuals, all females and all at Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear, (1) 23rd July 1989, (2) 26th July 1989 and (3) 6th/7th July 1990, 30th/31st July 1991 and 29th/30th July 1992.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* Filey, North Yorkshire, ♂, 24th-29th May 1992.

The report also adds two races to the British & Irish List: the North American and east Siberian race of **Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra americana* (Gosford Bay, Lothian, ♂, 31st December 1987 to 1st January 1988) and the central Russian race of **Common Gull** *Larus canus heinei* (three, all trapped: Essex, 18th February 1984; West Sussex, 21st January 1987; Kent, 31st January 1987), for which the BOURC comments 'identification of this race in the field is not recommended.'

Two Far-Eastern species, both possible vagrants—but also kept in captivity and also therefore possible escapes—are placed in Category D, which does not form part of the British & Irish List: **Asian Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa dauurica* (Fair Isle, Shetland, first-summer, 1st-2nd July 1992) and **Mugimaki Flycatcher** *Ficedula mugimaki* (Sunk Island Battery, Stone Creek, Humberside, first-winter ♂, 16th-17th November 1991).

The Norfolk **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* claimed in 1903 (*Brit. Birds* 3: 29; 86: 22, 199) was rejected, and that on St Kilda, Outer Hebrides, on 28th September 1911 accepted as the first British & Irish record.

A record of one species was withdrawn by the observer: **Yellow-nosed Albatross** *Dionedea chlororhynchos* (at sea off Cornwall, 29th April 1985); and a record of another species was not accepted because the identification was considered not to have been established beyond doubt: **Eastern Phoebe** *Sayornis phoebe* (Slapton, Devon, 22nd April 1987, preceding the accepted Lundy record, *Brit. Birds* 86: 500, by two days).

Records of four species were not admitted to the list, even though identification was accepted, because of the low-vagrancy but high-escape potential: **Ross's Goose** *Anser rossii*, **Red-fronted Serin** *Serinus pusillus*, **Lazuli Bunting** *Passerina amoena* and **Yellow-headed Blackbird** *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*. In addition, **Painted Bunting** *Passerina ciris* was removed from Category D for the same reason.

These changes bring the current total number of species on the British & Irish List to 552 (made up of 524 in Category A, 19 in Category B and 9 in Category C); a further 21 species are held in Category D.

The address of the BOU is c/o The Natural History Museum, Sub-department of Ornithology, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP.

R & M Conference 1994

I thought last year's conference was a good one—and so was this. The presence of several heads of European ringing schemes, in the UK for their annual meeting, had enabled the conference organisers to include three of them among the speakers. Lukas Jenni, of Vogelwarte Sempach, Franz Baerlein, of Vogelwarte Helgoland, and Rinse Wassenaar, of Vogeltrekstation Arnhem, gave excellent talks on, respectively, ageing and sexing of European passerines, a Euro-African study of migration, and the way in which the Dutch ringing scheme is organised.

The other talks ranged equally widely, and I especially enjoyed Peter Rock's study of roof-nesting gulls in Bristol, which also took him down their migration route through Portugal to Morocco; Beatriz Arroyo's delightful account of her study of Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus* in Spain; and Dave Okill's

report on the *Braer* tanker stranding, which took place just one year before, a report very much from the man on the spot. I also listened with a mixture of admiration and envy to John Willsher's description of how to create a ringing site from scratch—first buy your farm, then create wetlands, then reedbeds, then . . . ring 50,000 birds a year. As a change from birds, Tony Hutson told us much more about bats than the one fact that all ringers know: a bat caught in a mist-net invariably bites the hand that frees it.

Finally, last year's critic of the Ringing Office duly got himself elected on to the BTO Ringing Committee. He told me that he did not approve of what I wrote last year on this subject, so watch this space next year to see what impact he has made and how I report it.

(ALIO)

Birds in Beds

The Seventh Bedfordshire Ornithological Conference, held at Silsoe Agricultural College on 13th November 1993, was attended by about 180 participants. The previous six conferences were held during 1949-54, with the speakers including such eminent names as W. B. Alexander, R. P. Bagnall-Oakeley, Dr Bruce Campbell, James Fisher, E. M. Nicholson, B. W. Tucker and G. K. Yeates.

David Kramer, President of the newly formed Bedfordshire Bird Club, chaired the 1993 Conference. To set the scene, ex-County Recorder Paul Trodd gave a 'Brief History of the Birds of Bedfordshire', noting the large recent increase in numbers of fieldworkers, but decrease in Hawfinches *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*, the latter perhaps not unconnected with their habit of perching in tree-tops and the increase in Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus*.

Rob Hume gave a potted history of the journal *British Birds*, founded in June 1907 and still flourishing today.

Richard Woolnough, the Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust's Director of Conservation, opened a few eyes with his

thoughts on 'Managing Bedfordshire's Reserves for Birds' and Karen Bradbury of the RSPB continued the conservation theme with an ebullient account of 'Wild Birds and the Law'. In a lighter vein, Barry Trevis described birding in the Andes, and Gordon Langsbury took us on a photographer's trip through Europe.

For me, however, the highlight of the day was David Harper's description of his research into Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra* on the South Downs. Would any male *Homo sapiens* be able to 'deal' with ten females, as do some male Corn Buntings? The male's pre-occupations elsewhere leave his females to attend to all the nest-building, incubation, brooding and feeding duties. The current population decrease in the UK is about 10% annually, resulting in part from changes in cereal agriculture: more wheat, but less of the favoured barley.

Paul Trodd, who conceived and organised the event, deserves an all-embracing thank-you. It was a huge success. (Contributed by *Barrie Harding*)

YO '77: Rachel Warren

Rachel Warren was Young Ornithologist of the Year in 1977, winning the senior section at the age of 13. She won the prize for identifying bird songs and calls at the BTO Conference in December 1993, where we invited her to tell us what she has been up to since we presented the YOY award to her in 1977.

She told us that her most exciting ornithological experience to date has been her involvement in 1993 in a project studying Long-tailed Manakins *Chiroxiphia linearis* at Monteverde in Costa Rica.

Rachel read Natural Sciences at Newnham College, Cambridge, obtaining an upper second class degree in 1985. She then joined the Cavendish Laboratory, obtained a PhD in experimental physics and next spent two years at the University of Colorado studying the chemistry of chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) replacements, essential in calculating global-warming and ozone-depletion potentials.

She also worked on a study of the breeding success of the local Mountain Bluebirds *Sialia currucoides*.

Rachel is a trainee ringer with the Runnymede Ringing Group in Surrey, with which she was involved in a ringing trip to Portugal. She has also spent some weeks voluntary wardening on RSPB reserves at Minsmere and Loch Garten, and recently also on Skomer.

She is now working at the Centre for Environmental Technology at Imperial College, London, where she runs a computer model relating to the European acid-rain problem.

Rachel would welcome news of any long-term or vacation-length ornithological opportunities, whether voluntary or for a professional, anywhere in the world.

We cannot but comment with pride that the Young Ornithologists of the Year competition seems to have provided encouragement at just the right time for a very able environmentalist-cum-birdwatcher. We wish Rachel well in the future. Any offers should be sent to Dr Rachel Warren, Flat 24, 7 Elm Park Gardens, London SW10 9QG.

We should like to hear news of any other Young Ornithologists.

Silly corner

We do not normally make fun of sister magazines and journals; after all, we are all human and mistakes slip through. Since, however, *Bird Watching* magazine claimed egg on its own face, this one must be worth a mention. The January 1994 issue of that illustrious and popular publication reported that 'The British Trust for Ornithology's New Breeding Atlas was recently launched in the presence of HRH The Duck of Edinburgh'. They were quick to follow up in the February issue, under the heading 'Duck-egg on our faces', with a letter from a reader asking if it will be accepted by the Rarities Committee? How good it is to see that the fun has not departed the birding scene!

New Recorders

Andy Webb, 4 Morningside Place, Aberdeen AB1 7NG, has taken over from Ken Shaw as Recorder for Grampian (except Moray).

Andrew MacKay, 68 Leicester Road, Markfield, Leicestershire LE67 9RE, has taken over from Roger Davis as Recorder for Leicestershire.

May 'Bird Watching'

The May issue of the monthly *Bird Watching* magazine includes a photo-feature on displaying birds; assessments of the best-selling tripods; how to find Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii*, Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* and summer migrants; details of the best birdwatching sites in Worcestershire, Speyside and Devon; a debate on the origins of the recent Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*; and colour photographs of rarities, including Black-faced Bunting, Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* and Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—Northern Ireland

Tim Cleeves—Northeast

Frank Hamilton—Scotland

Barrie Harding—East Anglia

Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Alan Richards—Midlands

John Ryan—Southwest

Don Taylor—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

John Wilson—Northwest

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'



Monthly marathon



February's breast-banded passerine (plate 33) was named as Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* (66%), Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* (21%), Bimaculated Lark *M. bimaculata* (11%) and Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (2%). It was a juvenile Horned Lark, photographed by Dr R. J. Chandler in Texas, USA, in August 1992 (SCORE 34). The current leaders, who all got it right, are: Paul Archer (SCORE 473), Anthony McGeehan (439), G. Rotzoll (429), Heikki Vasamies (414) and M. A. Harris (399). The first person to reach 500—or the leader after the 15th stage (plate 60)—will win the SUNBIRD Holiday in Africa, Asia or North America.

The month's photograph (plate 72) is the first in a new competition, the seventh 'Monthly marathon' sponsored by SUNBIRD. Start your winning run now!



72. Seventh 'Monthly marathon', first stage: photo no. 95. Identify the species. Read the rules on pages 25-26 of the January 1993 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Bham, Bedford MK4 3NJ, to arrive by 15th June 1994



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 22nd March to 17th April 1994

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* Regular individual returned to Hermaness (Shetland), 26th March.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* Wigton (Cumbria), 11th April.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Narborough (Norfolk), 30th March.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* Near Morpeth (Northumberland), 21st March; perhaps same, Bempton Cliffs (Humbly Grove), 27th March; Garbole (Highland), 5th April.

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes* Tresco (Scilly), 1st-14th April.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* Male, Oxford Island, Lough Neagh (Co. Armagh), 24th March-4th April (considered by observers familiar with previously returning bird,

1989-93, probably to be different individual).

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* White-phase, Inch Island (Co. Donegal), 3rd April.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* At least ten, perhaps as many as 15, mostly adults, at Blennerville (Co. Kerry), throughout late March.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* Hartlepool Headland (Cleveland), 11th April.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* St Martin's (Scilly), 24th-25th March.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* St Just (Cornwall), 11th-17th April.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* Dungeness (Kent), 3rd-4th April.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* Brancaster (Norfolk), 17th April.



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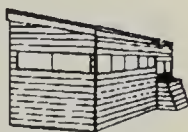
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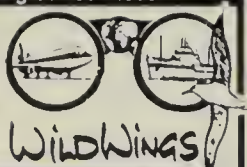
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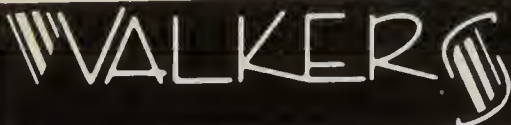
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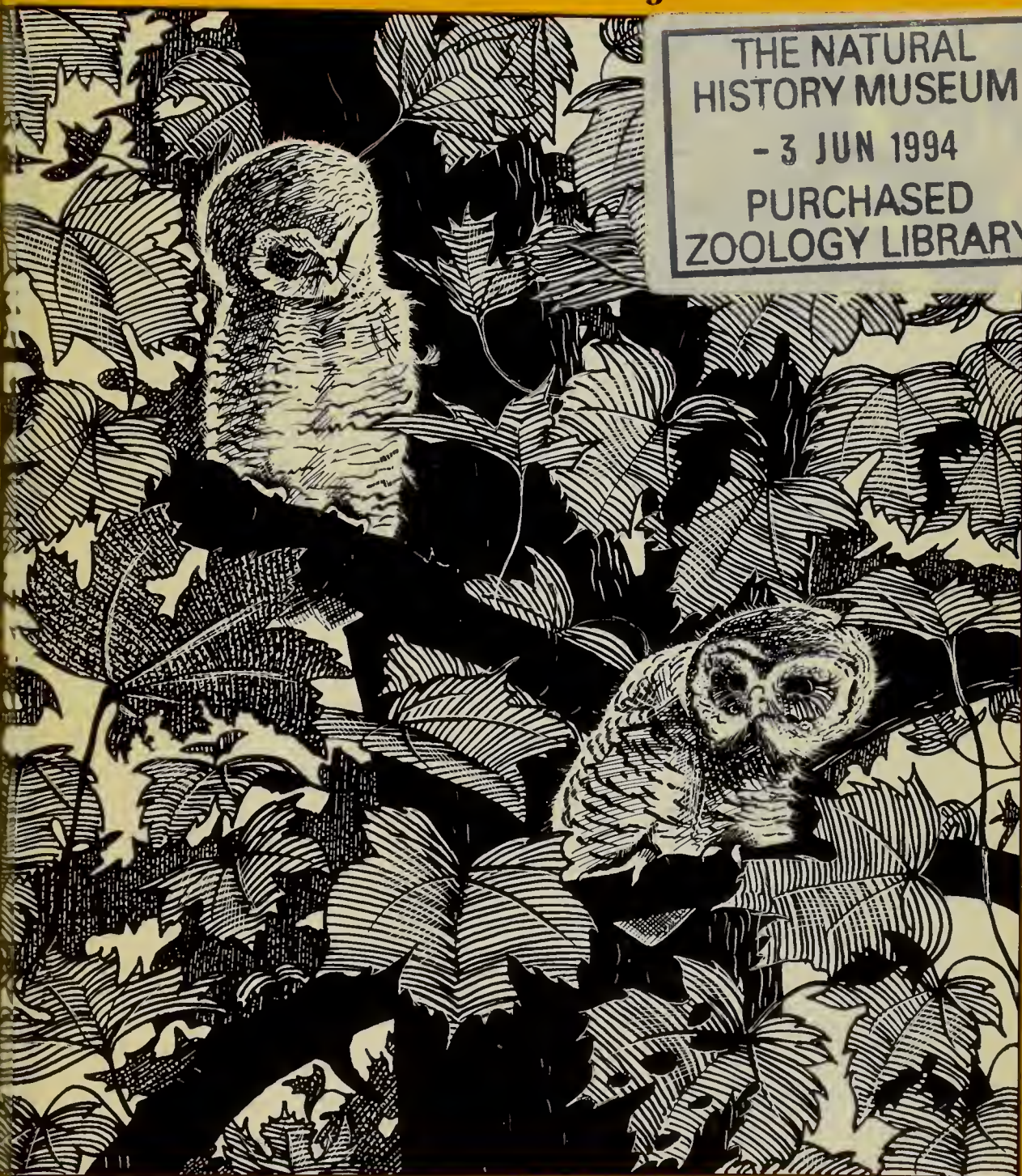
Line-drawings: 200 Common Starlings *D. Pocock*; 205 poplar plantation and Golden Oriole *Alan Harris*; 223 Red-footed Falcon *Brian Small*

Front cover: Ruffs at lek (*Jeff Youngs*: the original drawing of this month's cover design, measuring 18.6 × 20.8 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 32 in January issue for procedure)

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Volume 87 Number 6 June 1994

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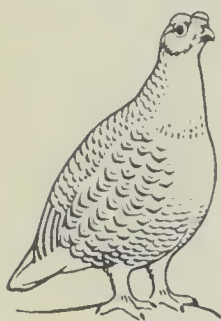
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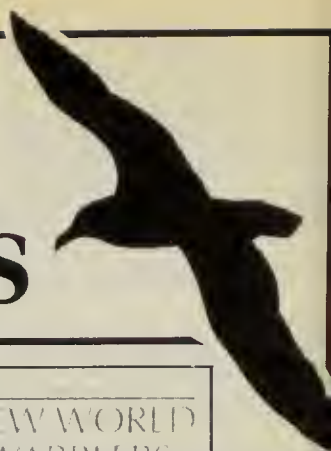
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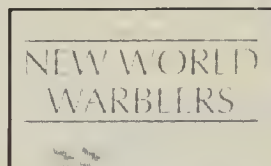
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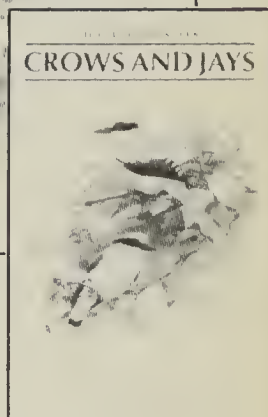
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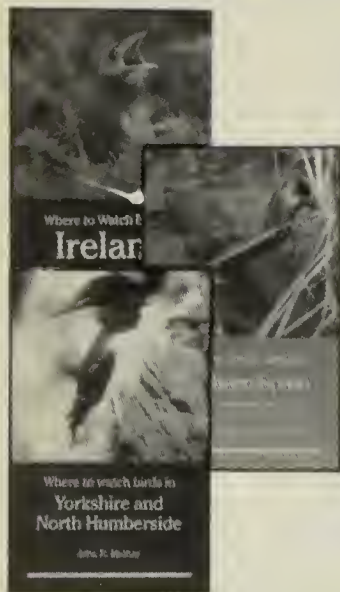
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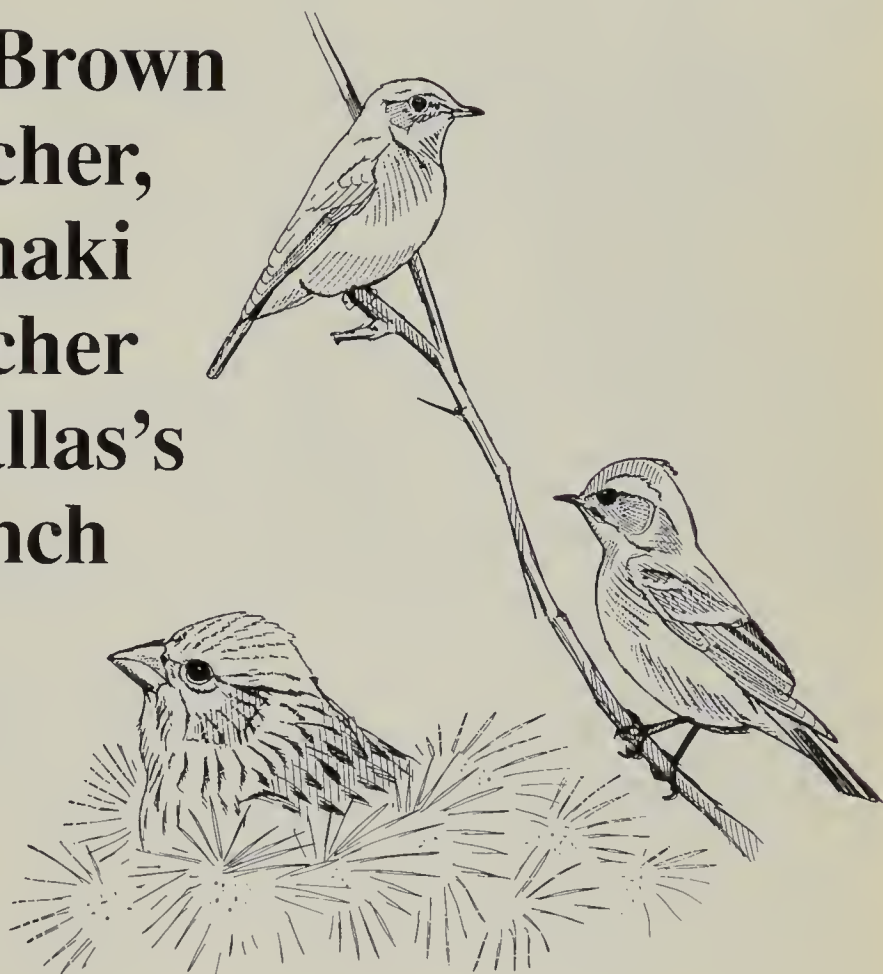
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Asian Brown Flycatcher, Mugimaki Flycatcher and Pallas's Rosefinch



Three recent decisions of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

David T. Parkin and Ken D. Shaw, on behalf of the BOURC

The 19th and 20th Reports of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (1993, 1994) included details of several changes to the British & Irish List. Among these are decisions relating to observations of Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*, Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki* and Pallas's Rosefinch *Carpodacus roseus* in Britain. These three species would seem to be candidates for natural vagrancy to Britain, but the records were not accepted onto the British & Irish List. The reasons are discussed here.

Asian Brown Flycatcher

On 1st July 1992, P. V. Harvey found an Asian Brown Flycatcher in the Plantation during his early-morning trap round on Fair Isle, Shetland. The bird was trapped and photographed (*Brit. Birds* 85: plate 297), and during the next few days was seen by many observers. The record was received by the BBRC on 20th November 1992, and the identification was accepted unanimously. In March 1993, the record was passed to the BOURC, and again the identification was accepted. Categorisation proved more difficult. After considerable study, the Committee decided that the species should be placed in Category D1, which forms an appendix to the British & Irish List.

The nominate race of Asian Brown Flycatcher breeds in southern and eastern Siberia from the Yenesei Valley and Mongolia east to Amurland, the southern shore of the Sea of Okhotsk, Manchuria, northern Korea, Sakhalin, Japan and the Kurils. There are disjunct populations in India in the foothills of the Himalayas from Chamba to Nepal and Bhutan, the Vindhya Range and the southern part of the Western Ghats, and in the mountains of southern China. It winters from India east to southern China, south to Sri Lanka, Indonesia and (rarely) the Philippines.

When assessing the origin of potential vagrants to Britain, the Records Committee examines a variety of information. Sometimes it is established beyond reasonable doubt that the individuals concerned were genuine vagrants or obvious escapes, but often the evidence is ambiguous. Then the decision is based on a balance of the likelihood of natural vagrancy against the likelihood of escape. In deciding this, the Committee follows established working practices and guidelines, and aims for a consistent approach. Two main factors have recently shifted the balance of this equation. One has been a reassessment of the occurrence patterns of the rarest vagrants from Asia and North America (Parkin & Knox in press). The other is recent changes in our knowledge of the cage-bird trade, including information from the Continent, from where many escaped birds are known to originate. The cage-bird problem has altered significantly in the last five or six years, since the opening of a huge market in birds from China and, more recently, from the countries of the former USSR. The variety of potential vagrants that is now available has increased dramatically. As a consequence, the Committee has adopted a more cautious approach to the assessment of records of such birds.

The Fair Isle Asian Brown Flycatcher was first seen on 1st July. As such, it does not conform to the existing, albeit limited, pattern of occurrence of the species in western Europe: the three previously accepted records were all in August and September (Denmark, September 1959, Christensen 1960; Germany, August 1982, Fleet 1982; Sweden, September 1986, Hirschfeld 1987).

There is also a clear pattern of autumn occurrence for almost all of the rarest Siberian insectivorous vagrants to Britain and Ireland (Parkin & Knox in press). So clear is this pattern that, whereas a first-year Asian Brown Flycatcher in autumn would be regarded as a 'possible' candidate for natural vagrancy to Britain and Ireland, at any other time of year it is distinctly less likely.

Flycatchers from the eastern Palearctic are becoming increasingly common in captivity. Recently there have been Verditer *M. thalassina* and Ferruginous *M. ferruginea* (= *rufilata*) (both congeneric with Asian Brown), Slaty-blue *F. tricolor*, Snowy-browed *F. hyperythra*, Orange-gorgetted *F. strophitata*, Red-breasted *F. parva*, Mugimaki, Yellow-rumped *F. zanthopygia* and Narcissus *F. narcissina*, amongst others. The males of most of these species are brightly coloured and relatively easy to distinguish, but many drab flycatchers are sold unidentified. Although the Committee is not aware of any Asian Brown Flycatchers having been advertised or imported into Britain since 1970, the availability of related species combined with the difficulty of identification make it very likely that this species also occurs in captivity. This view is also shared by colleagues on the Continent.

After much deliberation over the timing of this record and the escape potential, the Committee decided to place Asian Brown Flycatcher in Category D1 pending further evidence of natural vagrancy and the situation in captivity. The Committee would welcome information on either subject.

Mugimaki Flycatcher

On 16th and 17th November 1991, a first-winter male Mugimaki Flycatcher was present at Stone Creek, Humberside. The bird was found and identified by R. T. Parrish, J. Ward, G. J. Speight, S. Exley and J. M. Turton. The record started circulation of the BBRC on 13th August 1992 and was accepted unanimously. The BOURC began consideration on 20th February 1993 and identification was again accepted unanimously. After lengthy discussion, this species, too, was placed in Category D1, and not added to the British & Irish List.

The Mugimaki Flycatcher breeds in Russia from the northeast Altai eastwards through Transbaikalia to the Sea of Okhotsk, lower Amur, Ussuriland, Sakhalin and Japan. It migrates through Korea, Japan, eastern China and southeast Asia to winter in Indochina, Malaysia and western Indoncsia. It has been recorded in winter from southern China, Hong Kong, eastern Indonesia and the Philippines, but its status in these areas is poorly known. It is a vagrant to the Aleutians. There are no accepted records from western Europe. One in Treviso, Italy, on 29th October 1957 was not admitted to the Italian List.

This species has a very similar breeding range to Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*, and it is also a long-distance migrant. Although it is expanding its breeding range westwards (Rogacheva 1992), there is no pattern of westward vagrancy, even within Siberia. Mugimaki Flycatchers leave their Siberian breeding grounds earlier than Pallas's Leaf Warbler (Rogacheva 1992). While the weather at the time was favourable, the Stone Creek bird was recorded after all of the 29 Pallas's Leaf Warblers that were seen in Britain in 1991, and a full 20 days after the peak arrival of that species on 27th October (Evans 1992, 1993).

Mugimaki Flycatcher has been imported into Britain regularly in recent years. For example, 16 in 1986 from China via Germany, seven in 1989 from the Netherlands, and ten in 1990 from China (MAFF 1990, 1992a; WCMC 1993). The present individual was in its first winter, but this does not rule out

a captive origin, as birds trapped in China are said to arrive in Europe within a week or so of capture. The suggestion that 'very few consignments of any wild birds' were imported in the autumn of 1991 because of the anti-trade campaign (Gantlett 1991) is not substantiated by the facts. The number was still high: 130,000, compared with 185,000 in 1989 and 176,000 in 1990 (MAFF 1990, 1992a, 1992b). The 1991 total includes 153 unidentified flycatchers, including birds from China (46), Indonesia (57), Malaysia (50), and 18,246 unidentified 'finches' and 'softbills'. Import statistics are believed to represent only a proportion of the trade in foreign birds, and take no account of the trade on the Continent, where birds may also escape. The birdkeepers' newspaper *Cage and Aviary Birds* has been scrutinised by the BOURC since 1975. Mugimaki Flycatcher was first advertised on 23rd September 1989, and several further advertisements appeared in 1990.

The Committee considered that the extraordinary coincidence of the Humberside individual's occurrence, so soon after the species was first advertised for sale in Britain, gave rise to serious doubts about its origin. As with the Asian Brown Flycatcher, the Committee agreed to place Mugimaki Flycatcher in Category D1, pending further information on patterns of natural vagrancy and the situation in captivity. The Committee would welcome further information on either subject.

Pallas's Rosefinch

A Pallas's Rosefinch was present on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, from 2nd June to 14th July 1988. It was found by P. J. Donnelly, J. B. Ribbands and Dr K. F. Woodbridge, and was subsequently seen by many observers. It was trapped on 5th, 7th and 12th June and 13th July, and photographed (*Brit. Birds* 81: plate 265). The record started circulation with the BBRC in January 1989, and the identification was unanimously accepted. It began its circulation around the BOURC in November 1992, and again identification was accepted unanimously. After much discussion, the BOURC decided not to admit this species to any category; this decision was based upon three main considerations.

There was no dispute about the specific identity of the bird; it was trapped and photographed and, together with the biometric data, there was sufficient evidence to eliminate alternative species. Ageing and sexing were rather more of a problem, but, on general plumage features, it was either a first-year male or an adult female. Although Svensson (1992) did not give tail-feather shape as an ageing character for species in the genus *Carpodacus*, examination of skins at the Natural History Museum at Tring led Dr Alan Knox to conclude that the tail feathers are narrower and more pointed on first-years. Since the Orkney individual had broad, rounded tail feathers, this suggested that it was an adult female.

When the bird was first caught, however, its tail feathers were fresh and unworn. The four longest primaries were slightly faded and were broken at the tips. The combination of unworn tail and broken wing tips was curious, for the tails of most Pallas's Rosefinches collected in midsummer are quite worn. Svensson (1992) reported that *C. roseus* has a complete summer moult and, on 13th July 1988, a month after arrival, the bird was trapped again and

was found to be in heavy moult, involving wing, tail and body feathers. This is a cause for concern with this record: why should a wild bird show such a lack of abrasion to the tail at a time of year when it is about to commence its moult? A possible scenario is that it was a one-year-old bird that had recently replaced its tail. Although wild birds can completely lose their tails for a variety of reasons (e.g. because of cats or raptors), this is probably more common in captivity, particularly during handling associated with trade or importation. In any event, this aberrant plumage is a cause for concern.

A second point counting against a natural origin is the date of occurrence and the length of stay. Pallas's Rosefinch breeds in the mountains of central and eastern Siberia (Vaurie 1959; Flint *et al.* 1984). It is a short-distance migrant, leaving the breeding areas late in the year (November/December), returning in March/April. These dates are different from those of more 'typical' long-distance vagrants from Siberia. In the BOURC discussion, Ian Dawson showed that seven earlier (pre-1940) records of Pallas's Rosefinch, from Hungary, Switzerland, the Ukraine and European Russia, were all in November/December. Three of the four recent European records (including this one) have been outside this migratory window. Despite the smallness of the sample size, this difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.03$), suggesting that older and recent records may be genuinely different in character. The recent non-British records either have been rejected or are under review.

Thirdly, there is an increasing pattern of importation of this species into western Europe. Fifty were reported to the Department of the Environment as being brought into Britain in 1985 (WCMC 1993), and over 40 were reported to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in 1988 (MAFF 1989). These figures inevitably underestimate the true situation. The species has been bred in captivity on the Continent since 1983, and is now very cheap. Pallas's Rosefinches were on sale for £40 per pair at the 1993 National Cage & Aviary Birds Exhibition, and prices have fallen since (Knox 1994). Pallas's Rosefinch and Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus* are now among the commonest non-native Palearctic finches in captivity in Britain.

The combination of a short-distance migrant with an arrival in summer and a six-week stay, an increasingly common commercial import, and the unusual state of the plumage led the BOURC to recommend that the species should not be admitted to any category of the British List.

Finally . . .

The opening of the Chinese bird-market several years ago has resulted in many more species that are potential vagrants to Britain turning up in cargoes here, and subsequently escaping. The situation has been made worse by the economic collapse of the former Soviet Union, and bird imports from there, too. As a result of this, the number of eastern birds in captivity in Europe is increasing all the time. For example, at the 1993 meeting of the Association of European Rarities Committees on Heligoland, it was reported that a single importer in the Low Countries possessed about 30,000 east Palearctic passerines in (and around!) his aviaries. The list of Palearctic species in trade is considerable, and this is making the job of the BOURC more difficult (see, for

example, Knox 1994), for almost any species in captivity will eventually escape.

Species are added to Category D when there is *reasonable doubt* that they have ever occurred in a wild state, and this is very much a 'holding' category. The status of both of the flycatchers will be reviewed as and when further information becomes available.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Paul Harvey and Kevin Woodbridge for commenting upon this note, although they may not agree with its contents. We thank our colleagues on the BOURC for their helpful advice, and Peter Arcander, Rolf de By and Erling Jirle for information regarding the status of three recent Continental records of Pallas's Rosefinch.

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Comparative nesting ecology of the three British breeding woodpeckers



David E. Glue and Tim Boswell

Despite their striking plumages and loud calls, the three resident British woodpeckers, the Green *Picus viridis*, the Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and the Lesser Spotted *D. minor*, remain an elusive and relatively little-studied trio. Some of their nesting habits have been described by Tracy (1933, 1938) and Tutt (1951, 1956), with broader reviews by Palmer (1958), Campbell & Ferguson-Lees (1972), Sharrock (1976) and, more recently, in Cramp (1985). Considerably more research on these species has been undertaken on the Continent, and this has been continued, notably by Wesołowski & Tomiałojc (1986), Hagvar *et al.* (1990) and Török (1990).

The present paper examines many aspects of the breeding biology of the British woodpeckers, drawing largely on information given on 1,113 cards submitted to the British Trust for Ornithology's nest record scheme from its inception in 1939 up to 1989. The Natural History Museum at Tring supplied additional data on clutch size and nest sites from 53 clutches housed in the national egg collection. Details have also been taken from 57 woodpecker nests watched by the late A. Whitaker, and from 14 nests watched by the authors in the New Forest, Hampshire, and the Chiltern woodlands, Hertfordshire.

Distribution of records

Many nest-recorders chance across, or actively seek out, their local woodpeckers, but none has made them the subject of an intensive study. The records presented below broadly reflect, therefore, the ranges of the three woodpeckers as shown by Sharrock (1976); any weaknesses mirror areas with fewer nest-finders. The regional distributions of nest record cards for each species are shown in fig. 1.

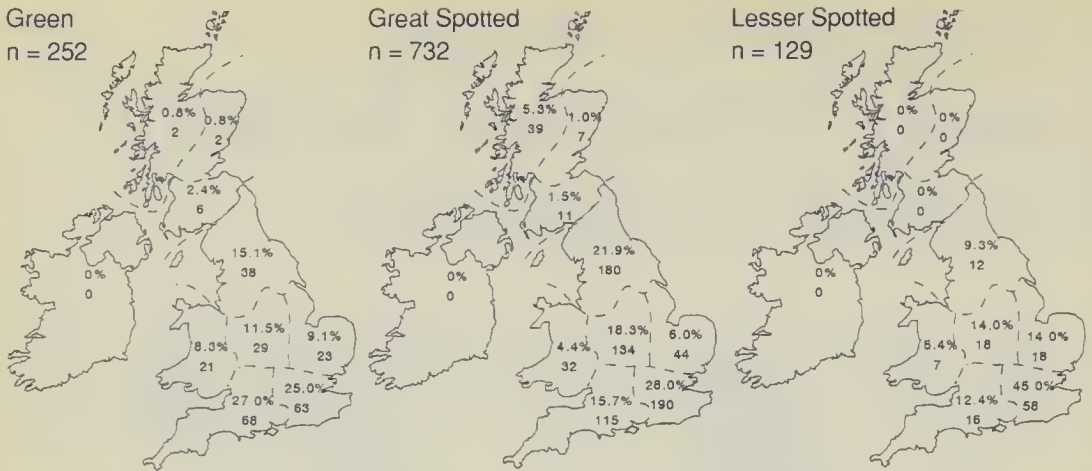


Fig. 1. Regional distribution of BTO nest record cards during 1939-89 for Green *Picus viridis*, Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor*

The Green Woodpecker is not a scarce bird over much of England and Wales, breeding north to the Scottish borders, where it becomes increasingly local. Most of the 252 cards are from southeast and southwest England, including many from strongholds such as the New Forest, the Weald of Kent and the Forest of Deau, Gloucestershire. Northern England has been recolonised during the twentieth century (in the east from 1913 and in the west during the 1940s: Temperley & Blezard 1951), and is well represented. Scotland was first colonised in 1951 (Borders region), since when there has been a gradual spread, checked sporadically by cold winters (Thom 1986).

The Great Spotted Woodpecker breeds throughout mainland Britain, if locally in places. Most of the 732 cards come from southern counties, with the Midlands well represented. Northern England and Scotland are surprisingly well covered, bearing in mind this woodpecker's disappearance from those regions in the nineteenth century (Harvie-Brown 1908); the northward recolonisation in the present century has been variously attributed to climatic amelioration and afforestation (Thom 1986).

The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker is considerably more restricted away from southern England, being very local in West Wales and northern England and absent from Scotland; like the other woodpeckers, it has never bred in Ireland. The great majority of the 129 cards are from southeast England, with a scattering from eastern counties and the southwestern peninsula and very few from Wales and the north.

Recent estimates of breeding populations in Britain suggest 10,000-15,000 pairs of Green and 30,000-40,000 of Great Spotted Woodpeckers (Hudson & Marchant 1984), and 3,000-6,000 pairs of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers (Cramp 1985). The nest-record samples therefore broadly reflect the relative abundance of each species.

Breeding habitats

The majority of the nest records for all three woodpeckers came from low-lying localities, with some three-quarters or more of nests below 150 m (fig. 2). The highest-lying nesting locality for Green Woodpecker was at 400 m, in a wooded valley in Powys, and that for Great Spotted was at 320 m, in forest

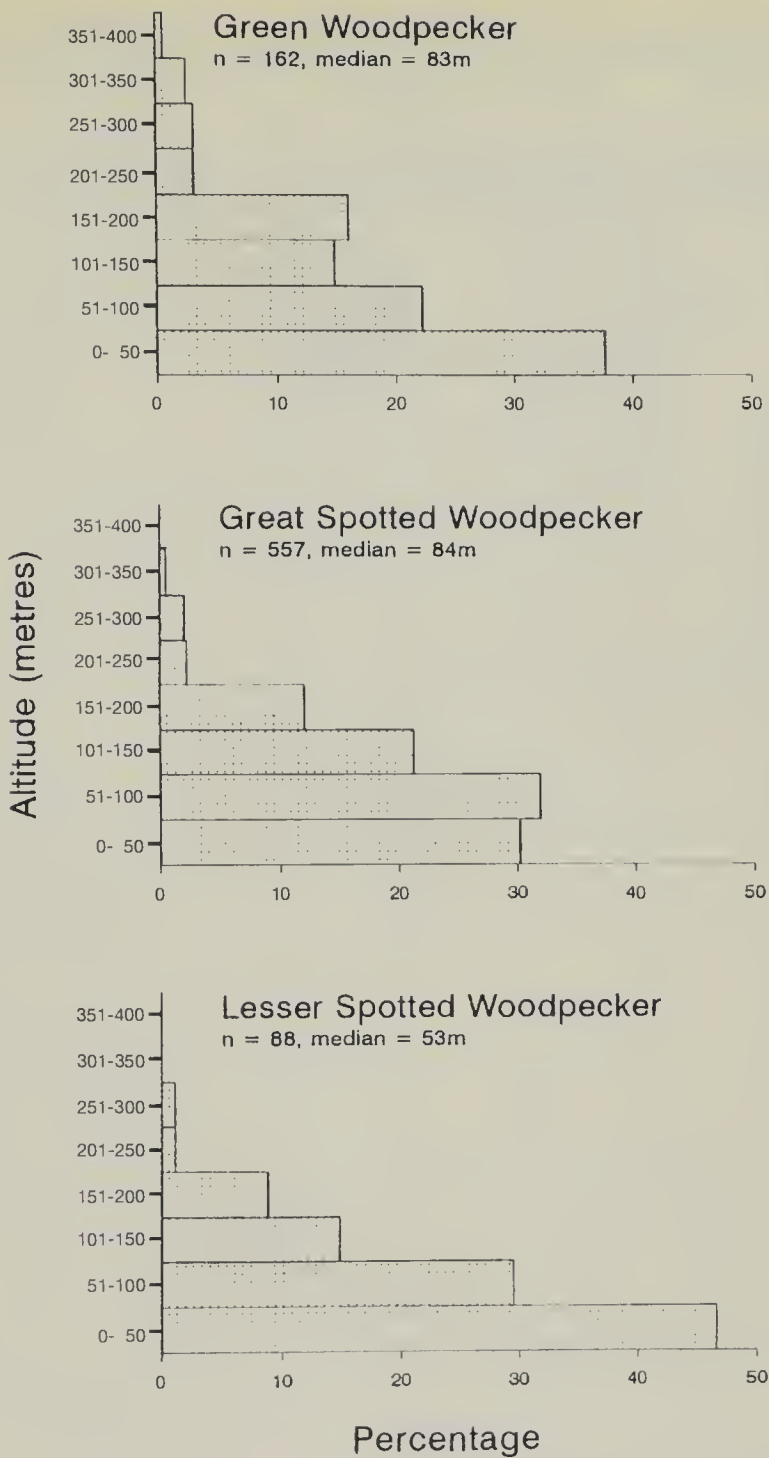


Fig. 2. Altitudinal distribution of Green *Picus viridis*, Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor* in Britain according to BTO nest record cards. Comparison of median altitudes shows that Lesser Spotted nests at lower altitudes ($\chi^2 = 10.54$; $p = 0.005$)

tracts of both the Scottish Highland Region and South Wales. Fewer Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers were found at such altitudes, the extreme being a nest in oak woodland on Exmoor, Devon, at 274 m.

All three species occupy predominantly rural habitats, with Lesser Spotted nesting comparatively more frequently in suburban areas than the other two. For each species, fewer than 1% of all nests were in urban sites (table 1). From the 1950s, Great Spotted Woodpeckers entered suburban sites such as parks and gardens (Parslow 1973). During the subsequent 20 years no significant increase

Table 1. Broad habitats occupied by Green *Picus viridis*, Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor* in Britain, as shown by BTO nest record cards

When suburban and urban categories are combined, the frequency distributions for Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers are not significantly different ($\chi^2 = 0.43$), but Lesser Spotted is found to nest in these habitats more often than the other two species combined ($\chi^2 = 7.74$; $p < 0.01$)

	Green Woodpecker	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Rural	219 (94.4%)	655 (93.2%)	110 (86.6%)
Suburban	11 (4.7%)	42 (6.0%)	16 (12.6%)
Urban	2 (0.9%)	6 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)

was noted in the numbers seeking supplementary food in suburban gardens (Thompson 1988), although there was an increase in rural gardens, reflecting an upward trend in the size of the breeding population (Marchant *et al.* 1990).

Despite their reliance on trees for nesting, the woodpeckers occupied a remarkably wide range of habitats (table 2). Green Woodpecker nests were found in extensive tracts of mature or ancient woodland, whether deciduous or mixed broadleaved and coniferous, although only occasionally in pure conifer stands. In the breeding season, Green, unlike the other two woodpeckers, feeds extensively on the ground, where ants are a key component in a very specialised diet (Cramp 1985). Such foods are common in many conifer forests, and the afforestation programme earlier this century in Britain has been implied as one of the causes of its range expansion (e.g. Temperley & Blezard 1951). For its nests, however, the Green Woodpecker requires mature timber, often not a common feature of modern commercially managed forests. Nests were found in many open woodland environments, such as well-timbered parkland and farmland, often with copses, spinneys and mature hedgerows as a feature. Other breeding sites ranged from open-country commonland and lowland heath to elevated moorland-edge heather-grass or scree where trees were thinly dispersed. The importance of ants in the diet was reflected in the nests found in open habitats with a sunny aspect and short, closely cropped turf: old pasture, paddock, ancient forest lawn, golf courses, large gardens, cliff-top grassland, downland and breckland, where grass swards may be kept low by mechanical mowing, grazing by sheep, horses or cattle, or salt-laden winds (table 2).

Most Great Spotted Woodpecker nests were in large fragments or forests of deciduous or mixed woodland (table 2); few were in mature coniferous woodland, most plantations being felled before the timber is old enough to provide ideal nesting sites. Woodland tracts were frequently in river valleys, often in streamside situations, with a few in timbered stretches along the coast and in elevated areas bordering moorland. Other habitats regularly recorded included tree-dotted parkland, orchard, bushy scrub, and a range of habitats close to man. Relatively few Great Spotted Woodpecker nests were found on farmland, exceptions usually being where there were large wooded clumps, extensive spinneys or tree-lined watercourses.

The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker nests were located almost exclusively in habitats with broadleaved trees, but covering a variety of situations: not only in deciduous woods, but along wood edges, in orchards, shelterbelts, thick hedges, and parkland dotted with established trees (table 2). Nests were also

Table 2. Breeding habitats occupied by Green *Picus viridis*, Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor* in Britain, from BTO nest record cards

Habitats follow the classification of Yapp (1955). *Other artificial habitats include, for Green, Great Spotted and Lesser Spotted, respectively: school grounds (2, 1, 2), golf course (2, 4, 0), industrial ground (1, 3, 0), cemetery (1, 0, 0), and hospital grounds (0, 2, 0)

Habitat	Green		Great Spotted		Lesser Spotted	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
WOODLAND	132	56.9	545	77.3	60	49.2
<i>Deciduous</i>	54	23.3	281	39.9	36	29.5
<i>Coniferous</i>	5	2.2	12	1.7	0	-
<i>Mixed</i>	38	16.4	185	26.2	11	9.0
<i>Unspecified</i>	35	15.1	67	9.5	13	10.7
SCRUB	10	4.3	33	4.7	9	7.4
<i>Scrub</i>	6	2.6	25	3.6	3	2.5
<i>Carr</i>	4	1.7	8	1.1	6	4.9
FARMLAND	42	18.1	45	6.4	25	20.5
<i>Arable</i>	6	2.6	4	0.6	3	2.5
<i>Pasture</i>	12	5.2	12	1.7	7	5.7
<i>Mixed</i>	4	1.7	5	0.7	1	0.8
<i>Damp grazing</i>	4	1.7	3	0.4	3	2.5
<i>Orchard</i>	9	3.9	13	1.8	6	4.9
<i>Unspecified</i>	7	3.0	8	1.1	5	4.1
HEATH AND MOOR	16	6.9	16	2.3	2	1.6
<i>Lowland heath with trees</i>	8	3.5	7	1.0	0	-
<i>Upland heather/grass moor</i>	3	1.3	3	0.4	0	-
<i>Breckland/ downland</i>	2	0.9	3	0.4	2	1.6
<i>Inland cliff/ scree</i>	3	1.3	3	0.4	0	-
WETLAND	12	5.2	24	3.4	9	7.4
<i>River-/ streamside</i>	11	4.7	22	3.1	8	6.6
<i>Marsh or fen</i>	1	0.4	2	0.3	1	0.8
GARDENS, PARKS, HABITATIONS	20	8.6	42	6.0	17	13.9
<i>Garden</i>	4	1.7	15	2.1	9	7.4
<i>Parkland</i>	10	4.3	17	2.4	6	4.9
<i>Other artificial habitats*</i>	6	2.6	10	1.4	2	1.6
TOTALS	232		705		122	

found in well-timbered pastures, the tree-lined banks of streams, and woodland fringing bodies of fresh water. The close association of many nest sites with fresh water was also noted in a detailed survey in Sussex (Dougharty & Hughes 1990). Those pairs studied closely were found to be generally shy and intolerant of excessive activity by man in close proximity to the nest. Nevertheless, the Lesser Spotted often frequents suburban and even urban tree-lined avenues, parks and gardens.

Nest trees

Woodpeckers require timber or a wood substitute in which to excavate their nest chamber. The main trees chosen by Britain's three woodpeckers as shown by nest record cards are listed in table 3. The Green Woodpecker turns chiefly to oak *Quercus*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, and less often birch *Betula*, beech *Fagus sylvatica* and elm *Ulmus*, all currently or formerly common large trees (Mitchell 1974) in its main wooded and farmland breeding haunts. Among 42 'other trees' listed for Green Woodpecker, 11 were identified: aspen

Table 3. Trees and other sites used for nesting by Green *Picus viridis*, Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor* in Britain, as shown by BTO nest record cards

	Green	Great Spotted	Lesser Spotted
Conifers	4	29	-
Willow/sallow <i>Salix</i>	7	19	14
Birch <i>Betula</i>	30	263	22
Alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	15	33	17
Sweet chestnut <i>Castanea sativa</i>	4	19	4
Sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	1	22	-
Beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	19	37	6
Oak <i>Quercus</i>	54	108	7
Elm <i>Ulmus</i>	15	33	14
Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	41	45	9
Fruit trees <i>Prunus</i>	11	22	17
Other trees	42	79	21
Nestbox	-	9	-
Pole/post	-	2	-
TOTALS	243	720	127

Populus tremula (three), hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and white poplar *P. alba* (two each), hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, and walnut *Juglans regia*. The 22 nest trees detailed in the Natural History Museum and in Whitaker's diaries endorse its affinity for a wide spectrum of the larger broadleaved, rarely coniferous, trees: oak and elm (four each), ash, willow *Salix* and alder *Alnus glutinosa* (three each), fruit trees *Prunus* (two), poplar, birch and fir *Abies*.

The Great Spotted Woodpecker appears actively to seek out suitable birches in many of the deciduous and mixed woodlands it occupies, but, like the previous species, it will excavate its nest chamber in a wide range of deciduous trees. Among 79 'other trees' listed in table 3, many were decaying stumps (see below, table 5), but 13 were specifically identified: poplar (four), hawthorn and hazel (two each), aspen, walnut, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, elder *Sambucus nigra* and common whitebeam *Sorbus aria*. The 48 trees detailed in the Natural History Museum and in Whitaker's diaries confirm this affinity for birch (25), with fewer nests in oak (nine), alder (four), elm (three), beech and fruit trees (two each), ash, white poplar and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*.

The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker's occupation of a broad spectrum of habitats, coupled with its small size, enables it to excavate chambers in the trunks and branches of trees of smaller girth, such as willow, alder and fruit. Among 17 'other trees' listed, two were specifically identified as poplar, and one each as hawthorn and lime *Tilia*. The nine trees detailed in the Natural History Museum and in Whitaker's diaries comprise fruit and holly (two each), willow, elm, beech, oak and alder.

Great Spotted is the only woodpecker reported as using nestboxes (sometimes those meant for other species), but both Green and Lesser Spotted will also excavate purpose-built boxes filled with balsa wood, sawdust or peat (du Feu 1989). Eggs may be laid in nestboxes, but with no young fledging successfully. Other sites used by Great Spotted were a gatepost and a telegraph pole.



73-75. Above, female Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*, Devon, June 1974 (Eric & David Hosking); left, male Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*, Leicestershire, June 1989 (S. C. Brown); below, male Great Spotted Woodpecker *D. major*, London, May 1986 (Eric & David Hosking)



Table 4. Heights of nests of Green *Picus viridis*, Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor* in Britain, from BTO nest record cards

A comparison of median heights shows that Great Spotted occupies the highest levels: Green 4.0 m, Great Spotted 4.9 m, Lesser Spotted 4.0 m ($\chi^2 = 22.04$; $p = 0.0001$)

	Total nests							Mean height
		0-4 m		4.1-8 m		8.1-12 m	12.1-24 m	
Green Woodpecker	243	123	(50.6%)	97	(39.9%)	17 (7.0%)	6 (2.5%)	4.6
Great Spotted Woodpecker	720	283	(39.3%)	343	(47.6%)	66 (9.2%)	28 (3.9%)	5.3
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	127	65	(51.2%)	37	(29.1%)	17 (13.4%)	8 (6.3%)	5.4

Nest heights

All three woodpeckers may rarely excavate as low as 1 m above ground, including in unusual sites such as fence posts. Most nests are found by ‘warm searching’ and any bias towards low nests, although unknown, is not thought to be great. Green Woodpecker generally excavates at between 2 and 6 m, Great Spotted at 3-7 m and Lesser Spotted at 2-8 m (table 4). A comparison of median nest heights, however, showed that Great Spotted most often occupies the higher sites: Green 4.0 m (range 0.6-15.2 m), Great Spotted 4.9 m (range 0.9-21.3 m) and Lesser Spotted 4.0 m (range 0.4-18.3 m). A tendency for the larger species to nest lower down in trees is also reflected in Whitaker’s findings, with mean heights of 4.8 m (S.E. \pm 0.7) for 21 Green Woodpecker nests, 5.2 m (S.E. \pm 0.3) for 46 Great Spotted, and 5.5 m (S.E. \pm 0.5) for ten Lesser Spotted. Other sources give Green Woodpecker as generally nesting at 1-5 m, Great Spotted at 3-5 m and Lesser Spotted at 2-8 m (Dementiev & Gladkov 1951; Sharrock 1976; Glutz & Bauer 1980).

The three species appear to select different relative heights in trees, which could help reduce competition. The height of the nest hole as a percentage of the total height of the tree, where known, was 46.6% (range 12.5-93.3%; $n = 15$) for Green Woodpecker, 65.1% (range 20.0-93.8%; $n = 56$) for Great Spotted, and 83.9% (range 73.3-97.1%; $n = 5$) for Lesser Spotted.

In addition, the mean diameter of trunk or branch used for the nest chamber decreases with the size of the woodpecker, again reducing competition. In cases where the thickness of the trunk or branch was measured, the mean diameter for Green Woodpecker was 39.4 cm (range 31-46 cm; $n = 4$), for Great Spotted 28.6 cm (range 15-41 cm; $n = 8$), and for Lesser Spotted 19.9 cm (range 10-43 cm; $n = 7$).

Nest site

Many observers noted the site of the nest chamber in terms of ‘trunk’, ‘branch’ or ‘stump’ (including such synonyms as ‘limb’, ‘hole’, ‘stem’ etc.). Again, woodpecker size appeared to influence the frequency with which various positions in a tree were used (table 5). The larger Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers nested more often in trunks, and the smaller Lesser Spotted in branches. Stumps appear to provide an important source of nesting places, especially for the two ‘spotted’ woodpeckers. When excavated in the main trunk, nest chambers were commonly sited under the junction of a branch, invariably a dead one, and also where the trunk or ascending limb had snapped off through lightning or storm damage.

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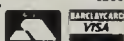
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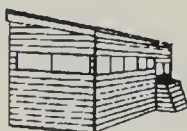
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Table 5. Position in tree of nests of Green *Picus viridis*, Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor* in Britain, from BTO nest record cards

Disregarding box nests, the frequencies of Green and Great Spotted nests in trunk, branch and stump were not significantly different ($\chi^2 = 5.61$), but Lesser Spotted nested significantly more often in stumps than the other two species combined ($\chi^2 = 28.16$, $p < 0.01$)

	Total nests	Trunk	Branch	Stump	Box
Green Woodpecker	82	53 (64.6%)	16 (19.5%)	13 (15.9%)	—
Great Spotted Woodpecker	312	155 (49.7%)	66 (21.1%)	82 (26.3%)	9 (2.9%)
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	74	18 (24.3%)	29 (39.2%)	27 (36.5%)	—

‘Degree of decay’ of the nest tree is not easy to define objectively. The various proportions of nests in ‘hard’ (mature or live) as against ‘soft’ (dead or decaying) timber are given in table 6. Where the timber was described as ‘living’, ‘mature’ or ‘sound’, this was defined as ‘hard wood’; where described as ‘old’, ‘dead’, or ‘broken branches’, or where damage was implied, it was defined as ‘soft’. The latter category was probably under-represented, as trees which appear sound externally may conceal a rotten centre. Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers nested equally frequently in live and dead trees, whereas Lesser Spotted in comparison tended to select timber showing a greater degree of decay. The stronger-billed larger species would appear better equipped for excavating harder wood. Hagvar *et al.* (1990) in Norway and Osborne (1982) in Britain also found that the larger species excavated harder wood. Osborne also speculated that the Lesser Spotted’s ability to exploit live orchard trees, which may be excavated more easily than certain larger timber, may free it from total dependence on dead wood. The availability of easily worked decayed timber may also be more important to this smaller woodpecker than species or height of tree.

Table 6. Relative soundness of trees used for nesting by Green *Picus viridis*, Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor* in Britain, from BTO nest record cards

For definition of terms, see text. Green and Great Spotted nested equally frequently in live and dead wood ($\chi^2 = 1.18$; n.s.), Lesser Spotted more often using decayed wood ($\chi^2 = 32.73$; $p < 0.01$)

	Total nests	NATURE OF WOOD	
		Mature/live	Dead/decaying
Green Woodpecker	213	117 (54.9%)	96 (45.1%)
Great Spotted Woodpecker	720	365 (50.7%)	355 (49.3%)
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	129	32 (24.8%)	97 (75.2%)

Nest chamber

Exploratory boring of future chambers may start in the previous autumn, but most excavation observed commenced in earnest in March and April. Trees were sometimes re-used in subsequent years, in rare cases for more than a decade: 41 trees held previous borings, involving six Green, 26 Great Spotted and nine Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers. Fresh borings were generally made below existing excavations, and less often above or beside (as rotting descends). Only occasionally was the same nest chamber used in the following year (18 cases in all). Natural cavities in trees were rarely used: once by Green and twice by Great Spotted.

The size of the nest chamber tends to increase with the size of the species.

Where chamber depths were measured, the mean figures were 38.1 cm for Green, 28.3 cm for Great Spotted and 21.4 cm for Lesser Spotted (table 7). Cramp (1985) gave depths of, respectively, 30-50 cm, 25-35 cm and 10-18 cm. The shape of the entrance hole varied between round and oval for all species, and the mean hole diameters were 5.3 cm for Green, 5.8 cm for Great Spotted, and 3.9 cm for Lesser Spotted (table 7). Cramp (1985) gave respective diameters of 6 cm, 5-6 cm and 3-3.5 cm. As the incubation and, more importantly, the fledging periods progress, nest holes may become enlarged and change shape through accidental damage by the parents, young and intruders. This was applicable particularly to Great Spotted Woodpeckers nesting in decayed birches.

All three woodpeckers generally laid their eggs on wood chips, which could form a layer several centimetres deep (5 cm in the case of one Lesser Spotted) on the floor of the chamber. Less often the eggs were laid on bare wood, and just occasionally the white glossy eggs became stained by the wood.

Table 7. Depth of nest chamber and diameter of nest hole of Green *Picus viridis*, Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor* in Britain, as shown by BTO nest record cards

	CHAMBER DEPTH (cm)			HOLE DIAMETER (cm)		
	No.	Range	Mean	No.	Range	Mean
Green Woodpecker	17	20-107	38.1	5	4.4-5.7	5.3
Great Spotted Woodpecker	11	20-46	28.3	5	4.8-7.6	5.8
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	4	10-25	21.4	5	3.5-5.1	3.9

Laying season

The date of laying of the first egg was recorded either by direct observation or by calculating back from a point when the age of the clutch or brood was known. Where only a single visit was made to eggs or young in an active nest of unknown development, it was assumed to be halfway through the incubation or fledging periods respectively (see below for mean values). First-egg dates, grouped in five-day periods, are shown in fig. 3.

Of the three, the Green Woodpecker laying season was the longest, spanning 104 days from the earliest date of 18th March (Hampshire, 1957, and Dorset, 1977) to the latest of 29th June (Essex, 1988). Great Spotted came next, covering 70 days from 30th March (Lancashire, 1976) to 7th June (Northamptonshire, 1984). Lesser Spotted had the most synchronised season, spanning just 41 days from 17th April (Essex, 1988) to 27th May (Hertfordshire, 1986), although the smaller sample size may have influenced the figures. Cramp (1985) indicated periods for the three species of, respectively, early April to July, mid April to the end of June, and mid April to early July.

For all three species, there were cases of repeat nesting attempts when eggs were lost during the laying or incubation stages. No cases of second broods were documented.

Clutch sizes

Clutch sizes were analysed using only cards showing the same number of eggs in active nests on consecutive visits at least 48 hours apart, or where a visit to

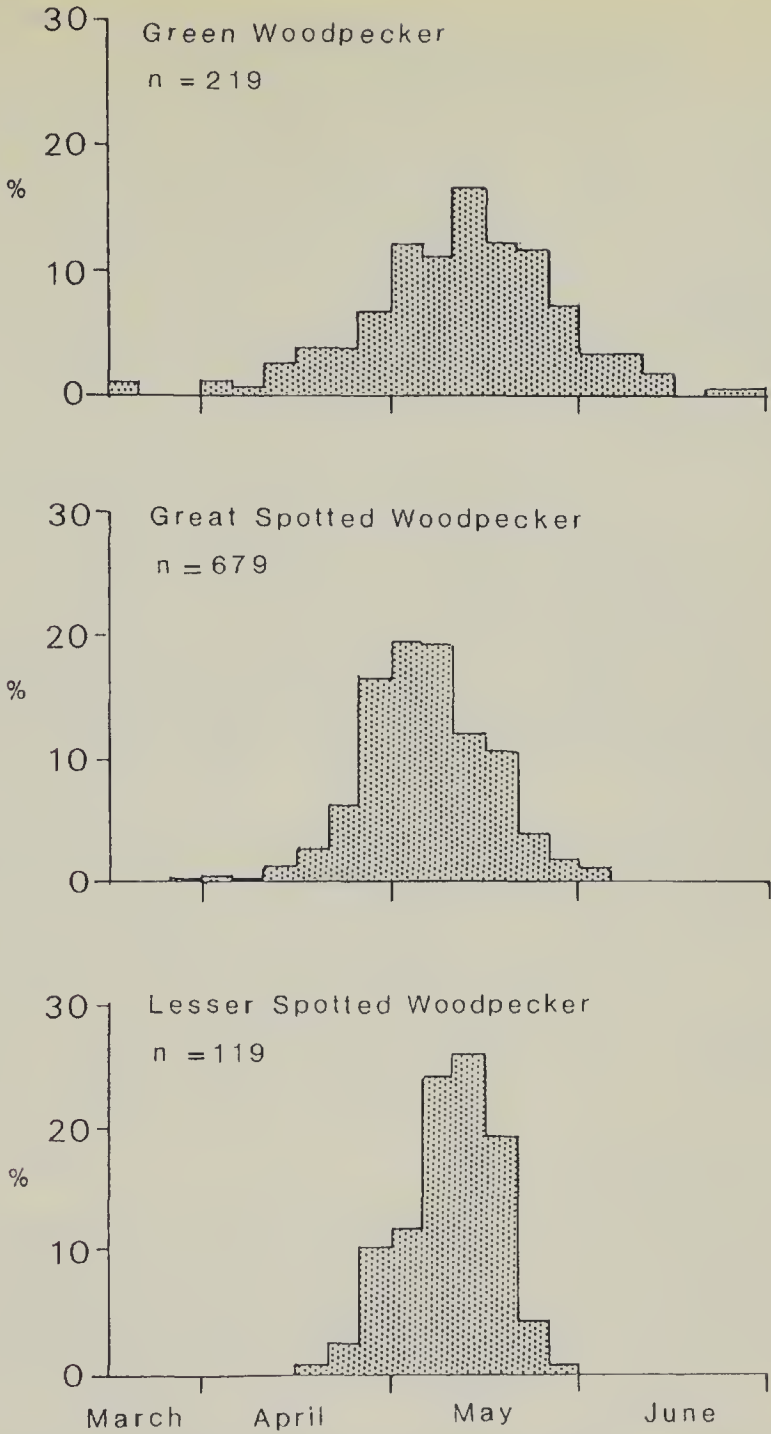


Fig. 3. Laying seasons of Green *Picus viridis*, Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor* in Britain during 1939-89 as shown by first-egg dates taken from BTO nest record cards

a nest containing eggs was followed by a visit when hatched young did not exceed the number of eggs. Clutch sizes from a combination of nest record cards and Natural History Museum data are shown in table 8. The commonest sizes were five or six eggs for both Green and Great Spotted, and five for Lesser Spotted. Cramp (1985) gave normal clutch sizes of, respectively, 5-7 (extremes 4-9; rarely, 11), 4-7 (3-8) and 4-6 (3-8).

Brood sizes

These were taken from nest histories where the young were two-thirds or

Table 8. Clutch sizes of Green *Picus viridis*, Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor* in Britain

	CLUTCH SIZE									Total	Mean
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9			
GREEN WOODPECKER											
Nest record cards	0	1	5	9	4	1	0	0	20	5.0	
Nat. Hist. Mus. data	1	0	1	6	6	5	1	0	20	5.8	
Combined data	1	1	6	15	10	6	1	0	40	5.4	
GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER											
Nest record cards	0	2	4	10	4	4	0	1	25	5.3	
Nat. Hist. Mus. data	0	0	2	5	9	1	0	0	17	5.5	
Combined data	0	2	6	15	13	5	0	1	42	5.4	
LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER											
Nest record cards	1	0	2	3	3	2	0	0	11	5.2	
Nat. Hist. Mus. data	0	1	4	8	2	1	0	0	16	4.9	
Combined data	1	1	6	11	5	3	0	0	27	5.0	

more through the fledging period (i.e. some 13 days or more old), and the brood was accurately counted in the nest chamber, or where the young were seen to fledge and to be with parents near the nest. All three species may rear up to seven young, Green and Great Spotted usually rearing 2-5 and Lesser Spotted 3-6 (table 9).

Table 9. Brood sizes of Green *Picus viridis*, Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor* in Britain, from BTO nest record cards

	BROOD SIZE							Total	Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Green Woodpecker	2	9	10	15	8	6	3	53	3.9
Great Spotted Woodpecker	10	19	45	29	29	7	5	144	3.6
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1	2	9	7	6	6	1	32	4.2

Incubation and fledging periods

The cards showed that, for all three species, eggs were laid at 24-hour intervals, rarely longer. Incubation proper started with the penultimate egg, less often with the final egg. Assuming the former, accurate incubation periods were calculated as follows: Green (five cases), 14, 17, 18 (two) and 19 days, mean 17.2; Great Spotted (five cases), 13, 15, 16 (two) and 17 days, mean 15.4; and Lesser Spotted (three cases), 13, 14 and 15 days, mean 14.0.

The fledging period was taken as the time between hatching of the first egg and fledging of the first young of the surviving brood. Periods were calculated as: Green (seven cases), 18, 21 (two), 22, 23 (two) and 24 days, mean 21.7; Great Spotted (15 cases), 18, 19, 20 (four), 21, 22 (three), 23 (four) and 25 days, mean 21.4; and Lesser Spotted (four cases), 17, 18, 19 and 23 days, mean 19.2. The actual fledging process usually took place in the early or mid morning. It was usually accomplished within the day, often quickly, one brood of five young Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers leaving over the course of 1 hour 23 minutes. It was not uncommon for broods to include one or, less often, two runts, and these may linger for a further day. In one extreme case, a poorly developed young Great Spotted Woodpecker stayed for a further 7-8 days before flying successfully.

Breeding success

Of the 252 Green Woodpecker nests studied, 48% were successful in rearing at least one young to fledging; the outcome was unknown at 47.6%, while 4.4% failed completely. Great Spotted had a success rate from 732 nests of 45.1%, just 4.2% being unsuccessful and the outcome unknown at 50.7%. Of 129 Lesser Spotted nests, 48.1% succeeded, the outcome of 42.6% was unknown and 9.3% failed. These rates may, however, be misleading. First, few nests had the contents checked on a regular basis owing to the frequent difficulty of access to the chamber, while there are problems with counting contents accurately. Secondly, many nests were found at an advanced stage (often when the young were noisy and being regularly fed), so the success rates given are likely to be higher than the true values.

A more accurate assessment of breeding success considers failures in relation to the numbers of days over which observations were made at each nest during laying, incubation and nestling periods (Mayfield 1961, 1975). This method calculates nest-failure rates, and standard errors can be calculated using Johnson (1979).

For the combined laying and incubation periods, assuming the mean lengths for each species given above, the relative success of nests (i.e. at least one egg hatching) was 86.8% for Green, 85.0% for Great Spotted and 91.8% for Lesser Spotted. For the nestling period, again taking the mean values given above, success in rearing at least one young through to fledging was 95.3% for Green, 95.3% for Great Spotted and 93.9% for Lesser Spotted. The total nest survival prospects for the combined incubation and fledging periods were thus 85.3% for Green Woodpecker, 83.5% for Great Spotted and 83.0% for Lesser Spotted over the full time period (partial losses of nest contents not taken into account). These results give further evidence of a high measure of success for these hole-nesting birds, nest failures for each species being marginally higher during egg-laying and incubation than during nestling periods.

Human interference and nest-robbing were causes of failure common to all three woodpeckers (one, 12 and two instances, respectively, for Green, Great Spotted and Lesser Spotted), while Green and Great Spotted also failed through displacement by Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* (one and six cases, respectively) and possibly predation by grey squirrels *Sciurus carolinensis* (two and one). Cold, damp weather caused the failure of three Great Spotted Woodpecker nests and one Lesser Spotted, and the latter species was usurped by Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus* (once) and possibly by Great Spotted Woodpeckers (three times). In addition, one Great Spotted nest was destroyed during egg-laying when the tree snapped where the excavation had rendered the walls very thin; another pair lost a brood when the tree blew down in a gale.

Discussion

The nesting habitats occupied by the three British woodpeckers are broadly the same as those used in central Europe (Glutz & Bauer 1980), the former Soviet Union (Dementiev & Gladkov 1951) and Finland (Pynnönen 1939; Haapanen 1965), although the proportion of coniferous trees (notably spruces

Picea) used is greater in ancient and primeval woodlands on the Continent (e.g. the Białowieża Forest of Poland: Wesołowski & Tomiaśojc 1986). In Britain, all three woodpeckers may co-exist and foraging ranges overlap in deciduous woodlands and a few other habitats. For example, in 1970, nests of each with young were located within 175 m in one section of ancient and ornamental woodland in the New Forest (Gluc 1972).

Morphologically, the woodpeckers possess features such as bill size, tongue length, and structure of feet and tail that enable them to forage by excavating in wood (Jenni 1981). In winter, they are ideally adapted to exploit food sources on and in the tree trunk, a relatively little-used microhabitat (Hogstad 1978; Conner 1979). In summer, all three species feed almost exclusively on arthropods when rearing young. Classical theories of community ecology (e.g. MacArthur & Levins 1967; MacArthur 1968; Lack 1971) predict that mechanisms may exist to reduce niche overlap, so enabling birds to avoid interspecific competition. How may woodpeckers share resources?

The present study has shown that egg-laying tends to peak at much the same time for each species (late April-May), the nestling periods also overlapping considerably, but differences in the spans of the respective breeding seasons reflect variations in diet. The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker feeds its young very largely on Lepidoptera larvae and aphids (Aphididae) gleaned from the tree canopy, taking fewer spiders (Araneidae), adult dipterans, Lepidoptera pupae and other items (Witherby *et al.* 1938; Török 1990). The Great Spotted also takes large quantities of Lepidoptera larvae, more Phalangidae, Hymenoptera, and adult Diptera (Witherby *et al.* 1938; Török 1990), gleaning and probing the foliage and branches and feeding more often on the trunk than the smaller woodpecker. It has a more varied diet, with parents observed bringing in small molluscs, dead nestling Tree Sparrows and Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus*, and others foraging for supplementary items such as bread and poultry foods in gardens (Gluc 1982).

Both of the 'spotted' woodpeckers, however, rely heavily on Lepidoptera larvae, and it has been argued that such temporarily abundant foods can relax the pressures of competition and allow greater overlap among sympatric species (Rabernold 1978). In contrast, the Green Woodpecker takes far fewer arthropods captured from the tree trunk and branches, the young being fed largely on an insect diet of ants and their pupae; this food source is regularly available to the Green Woodpecker with its sophisticated feeding apparatus (Cramp 1985), and is not subject to pronounced peaks in availability outside the winter months.

The present study also shows subtle differences in the tree species and in the degree of decay in trees selected by the three woodpeckers. The two larger species especially are capable of excavating a nest chamber in externally sound timber, but all British woodpeckers are drawn overwhelmingly to trees already partly or substantially decaying and hence of limited commercial value. Modern commercial forests have benefited woodpeckers to some extent during the twentieth century, but woods managed on a strict commercial basis involve periodic brashing, or thinning, before premature felling. Such woods offer limited food and shelter for woodpeckers, whereas those that include a

scattering of over-mature standards, tree stumps and rotten boughs—reflecting natural succession—are ideal.

Individual trees may be used for nesting over a decade, although a fresh nest chamber is invariably excavated each year (Sielmann 1959; Dougharty & Hughes 1990; see also Nest site, above). Fresh borings are frequent, and may be security against predators that may remember holes from year to year (von Haartman 1957; Sonerud 1985). The borings of woodpeckers provide, mainly in subsequent years, niches for a wide range of other woodland animals, notably cavity-nesting birds such as tits (Paridae), Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*, Common Starling and Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* (Campbell & Ferguson-Lees 1972), some vespertilionid bats and arboreal mammals. There is great scope for ornithologists to (a) quantify the importance of the role of woodpeckers in providing niches for other animals, (b) advise forest-managers and landowners of the existence of long-term nest trees, and (c) experiment in suitable nestbox designs as substitute woodpecker nest sites.

Acknowledgments

This paper was made possible through the dedicated efforts of contributors to the British Trust for Ornithology's nest record scheme over 50 years. The Forestry Commission kindly allowed access to certain woodlands. The Natural History Museum, Tring, readily made available data on clutch size and related matters. We thank especially Dr S. J. Baillie, Dr H. Q. P. Quick, Dr J. J. D. Greenwood, Dr R. J. O'Connor and Dr K. Smith for making valuable comments on an earlier draft, and Mrs C. Dudley and Mrs E. Murray for, respectively, collating records and producing artwork. Mrs S. Waghorn and Miss L. Aylward typed from the manuscript. Dr H. Q. P. Quick kindly helped with statistical analyses. The BTO's nest record scheme operates through financial support from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee on behalf of English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage, and under a contract from the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

Summary

The nesting habits of Green *Picus viridis*, Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor* in Britain are examined, drawing largely on nest record cards submitted to the BTO during 1939-89, and supported by observations made by the authors in Hampshire and Hertfordshire during 1970-89. For each species, three-quarters or more of nests were at altitudes below 150 m (highest sites: Green, 400 m; Great Spotted, 320 m; Lesser Spotted, 274 m), and broadleaved and mixed woodland were the main habitats (only occasionally pure conifer forest), but each species was found in a wide spectrum of habitats. Nest chambers were excavated in a wide range of trees: Green chiefly in oak *Quercus*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, birch *Betula* and elm *Ulmus*; Great Spotted mainly in birch and oak; and Lesser Spotted often in birch, alder *Alnus glutinosa*, willow *Salix* and fruit trees *Prunus*. Nest height varied: Green usually 2-6 m, Great Spotted 3-7 m, Lesser Spotted 2-8 m. Differences were also detected in the thickness of the trunk or branch selected for the nest, with mean widths of 39.4 cm for Green, 28.6 cm for Great Spotted and 19.9 cm for Lesser Spotted. Green nested most often in the trunk, the other two more frequently in branches, with stumps used regularly by all three species. Green and Great Spotted excavated most often in sound, mature timber, with Lesser Spotted heavily reliant upon dead or decaying wood, and nest-chamber size increased in proportion to the size of the woodpecker.

Laying seasons overlapped considerably. For all species, most clutches were started in May, although the season length varied: mid March to the end of June for Green, late March to early June for Great Spotted, and mid April to late May for Lesser Spotted. Eggs are normally laid at daily intervals. Individual clutch sizes varied widely: for Green usually 5-6 eggs (extremes 2-8), for Great Spotted 5-6 (3-9) and for Lesser Spotted 5 (2-7). Incubation was shared by the sexes, with periods of 14-19 days (mean 17 days) for Green, 13-17 (15) for Great Spotted, and 13-15 (14) for Lesser Spotted. All three species may rear 1-7 young: both Green and Great Spotted usually 2-5, and Lesser Spotted normally 3-6.

Nest survival, using the Mayfield (1961, 1975) analysis, showed high measures over the combined incubation and fledging periods: 85.3% of Green Woodpecker nests, 83.5% of Great Spotted and 83.0% of Lesser Spotted nests reared at least one young to fledging. The major reasons given for failure were interference or nest-robbing by man, competition with Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* and grey squirrels *Sciurus carolinensis*, and cold and damp weather.

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In Memoriam

Garefowl or Great Auk

Pinguinus impennis

Exactly 150 years ago, on about 3rd June 1844, a party of 14 Icelandic fishermen/fowlers set out from Kirkjuvögur in an eight-oared boat to make the crossing to the seabird colony of Eldey. There they hoped to collect eggs and birds, not for food, as they, and their ancestors, had done for decades, but to satisfy the demand from dealers in bird skins in 'enlightened'

Europe. Because of the heavy swell, only three of the 14 managed to jump ashore: Islefsón, Brandsson and Ketilsson. On scrambling over the basal ledges, they came upon two Garefowl and an egg. Probably as a result of the birds being startled, the egg was found to have been cracked, so Ketilsson discarded it: a damaged egg could not be sold. Brandsson and Islefsón each grabbed and killed an adult, taking the corpses back to Reykjavík, where they were prepared as skins for sale to dealers. By that time, the Garefowl was not only an endangered species, but any that remained had a price on their head, thanks to the desire among ornithologists to own one. Owing to a geological quirk, the ancestral breeding place of the Garefowl, the more remote Geirfuglasker, had 15 years earlier sunk beneath the waves, forcing the big birds to utilise the base of Eldey, a much closer and more accessible site for humans to exploit.

Thus, around 3rd June 1844, the Garefowl's existence on Earth ceased. Millions of years of evolution terminated, thanks to a few centuries of man entering the bird's domain.

Perhaps the saddest thought which remains is that, as we now know, auks can be conditioned to breed in captivity, and that some bird species, even when reduced to virtually a single pair, can be brought back from the brink of extermination. Equally sad is that lessons were not learned, and other species followed the Great Auk into oblivion, even in this present century. The last Canary Islands Oystercatchers *Haematopus (moquini) meadewaldoi* were rendered extinct in June 1913 by David Bannerman. Again, that was a long-lived species, and even the last pair in existence had the potential to produce a few young annually to provide the nucleus of a new population, given the correct conservation.

Today, some North Atlantic seabirds remain perilously close to extinction: the Madeira Petrel (or Freira) *Pterodroma madeira* and the Bermuda Petrel (or Cahow) *Pterodroma cahow* exist in single-figure and double-figure breeding numbers respectively. Their longevity, and eleventh-hour conservation efforts by dedicated groups and individuals, have meant that they have not quite gone. They may yet do so. Their endangered status has resulted from the predations of rats *Rattus*, brought to remote islands by the agency of man. In 150 years, man has taken so much and given so little.

Can not the full efforts of genetical engineering be aimed at resurrecting the 'lost' species instead of producing more of the most ubiquitous and destructive species on Earth, viz. man?

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Notes

Hazel Grouse in the Pyrénées Since the French breeding bird atlas (Yeatman 1976), the Hazel Grouse *Bonasa bonasia* has been considered nonexistent in the Pyrénées (Elosegui 1985; CROAP 1987). It is true, however, that its secretive nature and habitat preference make it difficult to observe.

In spite of this negative general belief, a survey was started in 1976. All information and reported sightings since the end of the last century up to the present were re-examined (Catusse 1984) and fieldwork carried out to try to discover irrefutable evidence for the presence of this species (Catusse *et al.* 1992). In the period 1980-92, 13 reliable reports have been gathered (table 1). Five others are in the process of being authenticated, including the reported discovery of a nest on the south side of the central Pyrénées (P. Boudarel verbally).

During the springs of 1992 and 1993, attempts were made to locate the species by getting it to respond to a whistle-call, but these met with no success.

The individual sightings (table 1) include definite breeding in the central Pyrénées, in the higher reaches of the Garonne valley, but elsewhere the evidence is still too slight to claim that this species is colonising both the French and the Spanish sides of the Pyrénées.

Table 1. All reports of Hazel Grouse *Bonasa bonasia* in the Pyrénées from 1980 until September 1993

Ref. no. (see map)	Date or dates	Observer	Locality	Nature of observation
1	15th August 1981	C. Fadat (<i>in litt.</i>)	Quérigut	single seen
2	winter 1980-82	G. Bongert (verbally)	Camurac	four seen
3	1981-83	J. P. Baraille (Office national des forêts)	forêt de Lège	singly twice
4	November 1983/84	J. L. Grange (<i>in litt.</i>)	Bois de Sescue (Ossau)	single flushed
5	April 1984	L. Larrieu (verbally)	Melles (Artigues-Ascou)	pair seen
6	October 1984	P. A. Dejaifue	Vallespir	single seen
7	about 1985	P. Escazeau (verbally)	Gouaux de Luchon	single seen
8	1989	E. Menoni	Luchon	single seen
9	30th December 1991	T. Mothe	Couledoux	female seen
10	19th February 1992	T. Mothe	Couledoux	tail feather found
11	September 1992	G. Dieuzaide	Col de Caube	single flushed
12	October 1992	Y. Coumes	Artigue d'Arlos	single flushed
13	20th April 1993	Dr P. Sacau	Labach de Melles	single

The origin of the Pyrenean Hazel Grouse cannot be decided for certain. Catusse *et al.* (1992) suggested three possibilities:

1. Reintroduction;
2. Migration;
3. Continuing presence of a relict population.

Given the present state of knowledge, the first two hypotheses both seem unlikely: no breeder is known to exist in France or Spain capable of raising a sufficiently large number for release, and the nearest known wild population is more than 300 km away. On the other hand, the third suggestion would explain the episodic observations (Catusse 1984; Catusse *et al.* 1992).



Fig. 1. Sites of sightings of Hazel Grouse *Bonasa bonasia* in the Pyrénées during 1980-93. Stars show location of observations listed in table 1: left-hand star, ref. no. 4; large star ref. nos. 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 & 13; third star, ref. nos. 1 & 2; right-hand star, ref. no. 6 (redrawn by R. J. Pytherrch)

Investigations and the collection of any clues (feathers, faeces, etc.) are continuing. The French departmental authorities have been alerted to ensure the legal protection of this species. A scientific programme is, however, not yet planned because of the very small numbers discovered by the present surveys.

Observations from any ornithologists who have visited or may be visiting the Pyrénées would be warmly welcomed.

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Leg coloration of Red-necked Stint Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* is a common passage migrant through Hong Kong in spring, with peak numbers in the last four years (1990-93) of 1,000, 500, 474 and 830 (*Hong Kong Bird Reports*; pers. obs.). During these four years, I have noted a small number of individuals showing aberrantly coloured legs.

Singles on 14th and 19th April 1990, 22nd April 1991 and 28th April 1993 showed variable and irregular clear-cut orange areas on their otherwise black legs. Estimates of the area of the leg so marked ranged from 30% to 70% and the impression was of a lack of pigmentation in those areas. In addition, also on 14th April 1990, I noted one showing wholly orange legs of exactly the same shade as those which were patchily marked.

There have been reports of Little Stints *C. minuta* with pale legs and both Long-toed Stints *C. subminuta* and Temminck's Stints *C. temminckii* with dark legs (*BWP* vol. 3; *Brit. Birds* 70: 392; 80: 242), but I can find no reference in the literature to any Red-necked Stints with aberrant leg coloration.

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Turtle Doves feeding on corydalis seeds in southeast Wales Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* have a southeasterly distribution in Britain; in Wales they occur mainly in the border counties, being scarce in the west (Sharrock 1976). Their distribution has been related to that on arable land of fumitory *Fumaria*, the seeds of which provide 30-50% of the Turtle Dove's diet (Murton *et al.* 1964). In Gwent, southeast Wales, they breed mainly in the south and east (Tyler *et al.* 1987). While carrying out fieldwork in 1981-85 for the Gwent breeding atlas, I recorded Turtle Doves most commonly in clear-felled areas and in young restock plantations in the east of the county. In this part, there is an extensive area of predominantly conifer forest on an Old Red Sandstone conglomerate ridge running to the west of the Wye Valley, from near Monmouth south towards Chepstow and west to the Wentwood Forest. In this forest block on the Trellech Ridge, Turtle Doves were often observed in clearings, feeding on the ground on seeds of climbing corydalis *Corydalis claviculata*. *Corydalis* is generally scarce in woodland in Wales, but is locally abundant on the Trellech Ridge wherever trees are felled; it is closely related to fumitory, being a member of the same family (Fumariaceae), and hence its seeds may be expected to be a favoured food for Turtle Doves. Although *BWP* (vol. 4) mentions seeds of Fumariaceae, I can find no other records specifically of corydalis seeds in the diet of the Turtle Dove.

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Intended predation of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker nestlings by Great Spotted Woodpecker In June 1976, I was photographing Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos minor* at their nest hole 11 m above ground level towards the top of an almost totally dead willow *Salix*, situated on the edge of semi-open woodland on a large estate in south Staffordshire. My photographic hide was on top of a pylon about 1.5 m from the nest. During my first session in the hide, both adult Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers were feeding their young about every 30 to 40 minutes. The somewhat noisy young, being well developed, were leaning out of the nest hole to be fed.

At 10.00 GMT, whilst both adults were away from the nest and the young



76. Female Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor* with food for young at nest hole in willow *Salix*, Staffordshire, June 1976 (S. C. Brown)

were quiet, a male Great Spotted Woodpecker *D. major* landed on the tree about 1.5 m above the nest and the noise made by his claws caused the young to commence their food calls. Immediately, the Great Spotted Woodpecker worked his way down to the hole and proceeded to open it up, presumably in order to take the nestlings. I made a single exposure (plate 77) and then called out to frighten the Great Spotted Woodpecker away, to prevent him taking the brood. He did not return during the remaining four hours that I was in the hide, and the young fledged two or three days later.

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77. Male Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* in the process of enlarging nest hole of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *D. minor* shown in plate 76, June 1976 (S. C. Brown)

Chiffchaff chasing small bat At about 14.00 GMT on 11th April 1990, at West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, I saw a small bat, probably a pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, flying and circling at a height of about 20 m and in good light between oak trees *Quercus* bordering a road. The bat may possibly have been ill to behave in this way in the early afternoon, although its flight was strong and, viewed through binoculars, it looked normal. After about two minutes, a Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, which I assumed to be a male which had been singing in the area for the previous few days, dashed out and chased the bat at a distance of 0.3-1 m. It followed the twisting bat closely for about 30 seconds, and then flew off, but about 45 seconds later it returned and resumed chasing. After a further 30 seconds, the bat left the oak trees and flew across the road, still closely pursued by the warbler; unfortunately, I lost sight of the pair as they went behind a high wall.

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Red-billed Choughs fostering young Since 1982, on the Calf of Man, Isle of Man, a pair of Red-billed Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* has bred in a purpose-built nestbox placed in the top window of a grass silo. In 1990, they successfully fledged three young on 5th June. These young were colour-ringed, using individual combinations, and were seen for a further six weeks or so feeding with their parents in the adjacent fields. About three weeks after they had fledged, a fourth, unringed, youngster appeared and was seen begging from the adults; at no time was it seen to be refused food or shown any indifference. At this stage, the adults would often split up, taking two young each. The 'intruder' spent 70% of its time with the family group over a period of two to three weeks, after which the young became more independent and began foraging for themselves in other parts of the island. It was seen both to join and to leave the group on several occasions. It is not known whether the intruder came from another pair of choughs on the Calf or had wandered from the Isle of Man.

ARON SAPSFORD

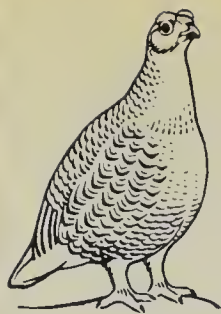
3 Main Road, Upper Foxdale, Isle of Man

House Sparrow learning to exploit food of caged Goldfinch by extracting tray In the winter of 1984, in Vitoria, northern Spain, I had a caged Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* outdoors where many House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* regularly came to feed on seeds I left for them. At least one male sparrow soon learned how to extract the lower tray of the cage, pulling it with its bill, so that seeds for the Goldfinch remaining at the bottom of the cage became available.

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Derek Goodwin has commented that it is especially 'remarkable that the sparrow learned to pull the tray. This would seem to show insight, at least an ability to associate the seed with the substrate it was on and to realise (how?) that the latter could be removed as a whole. But then *P. domesticus* seems to be a very brainy bird.' EDS



Letters

Pelagic seabirds and marine predators Some older readers of this journal must have experienced, as I did, a feeling of *déjà vu* on reading the letter by Halle (1991) in which he wondered how seabirds survive the attentions of underwater predators when they have to roost or rest on the sea, for he had published an almost identical query 20 years before (Halle 1971).

There is, of course, no unitary answer to the problem—no ‘single means’, as Professor Halle seems to imply—but, after considering the feeding methods of Ascension Island seabirds, I did offer a ‘partial answer’ in my paper on the adaptive significance of seabird plumage types (Simmons 1972, page 478): namely, that tropical seabirds generally avoid sustained contact with the sea at all times, even when feeding. This is especially true of the Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* and of frigatebirds *Fregata*, which never settle on the sea and have even lost the waterproofing of their plumage. I could also have pointed out that many species which do rest on the sea have white underparts, which act as camouflage against the sky when viewed from below; indeed, the white is often confined to that area of the seabird which lies below the water-line—the so-called ‘swimmer-pattern’, as first defined by Philips (1962) and summarised and discussed in Simmons (1972).

Many tropical seabirds also return to land each day to roost, even when not breeding. At Ascension Island, for example, substantial numbers (of boobies *Sula* and Black Noddies *Anous minutus* especially) may be seen flying in the evenings towards Boatswainbird Islet (the main breeding and roosting station at Ascension) from the open sea, as I observed once again in March 1990. Although they sometimes form rafts on the sea when feeding inshore, Brown Boobies *S. leucogaster* (my particular interest) settle in larger numbers at day-roosts on rocks and headlands nearby. When swimming inshore, the birds are particularly cautious, continually dipping their heads below the surface as if peering underwater and seldom remaining at one spot for long; if subject to the attentions of the local blackfish *Melichthys niger* when swimming, they stow up both feet against their flanks and sometimes regurgitate, thus lightening themselves for a speedy take-off and distracting the attention of the fish with food (Simmons 1967).

In summary, many seabirds avoid being taken by underwater predators at sea by adopting one or more of the following ploys:

- (1) never settling on the water at all, or only very briefly;
- (2) taking their food on the wing or from the surface quickly, without submerging;
- (3) remaining on the wing all the time they are at sea;
- (4) returning to land to roost overnight;
- (5) leaving the water quickly if they do dive below;
- (6) keeping a look-out for underwater predators while on the surface;
- (7) taking counter measures if they attract the attention of a predator.

In addition, many species have plumage features which camouflage them. So, there are, indeed, some facts for Professor Halle to ponder, and I have no doubt that the list could be extended; like him, however, I have been too busy in recent years with other matters to check the seabird literature fully.

K. E. L. SIMMONS

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Selection of odd or unusual prey by raptors P. I. Morris (*Brit. Birds* 83: 552) recorded Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* apparently selecting and stooping at lone individuals of wader species despite the presence of large flocks of other suitable prey species, and commented that the tendency for Peregrines to attack 'singularly different' prey 'may apply also to other raptors, but it seems poorly reported in the extensive literature.' The matter was first investigated experimentally by Mueller (1971, *Nature (London)* 233: 345-346), but his paper, not being in a bird journal, may have been overlooked. Mueller used six tame American Kestrels *F. sparverius* and two Broad-winged Hawks *Buteo platypterus* in experiments with white or grey laboratory mice *Mus musculus*. Each raptor was presented with nine mice of one colour and one of the other colour, on a white or grey background, replicating colour combinations and backgrounds in over 200 experiments with each bird. The raptors were allowed to take one prey item in each experiment. All eight predators showed a statistically significant preference for odd mice, but, interestingly, only of one colour: four American Kestrels preferred white odd mice; the remaining two kestrels and the two hawks preferred grey odd mice. The colour of the background, and hence how conspicuous the prey were, had relatively little influence on the results.

If this behaviour is, indeed, widespread under field conditions, at least two interesting consequences could follow. Each is more likely if birds of prey also select odd individuals when they encounter them alone, rather than in a group (Mueller tested only for selection from a group). First, aberrant (e.g. melanistic or albinistic) individuals of common prey species may be preferentially preyed on not because they are conspicuous, but because they are odd; such differential predation would select against aberrant plumage. Secondly, normal-plumaged birds occurring outside their usual range may be at greater risk of attack by birds of prey compared with more familiar, resident species; enhanced risk of predation may be one (but certainly not the only) reason why extralimital vagrants rarely found new populations.

JOHN H. LAWTON

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Real birdwatchers The editorial comment following David Holman's letter (*Brit. Birds* 86: 43) suggests that 'real birdwatchers' are those who have found and identified the highest number of different species. You fail to mention study, understanding, recording, or conservation: only identification. Perhaps your comment, like David Holman's letter, was intended as a 'fairly flippant piece', or is it *BB*'s view that those of us who have more interest in birds than just identifying them are not 'real birdwatchers'?

DAVID NORMAN

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A personal point of view expressed a decade ago (*Brit. Birds* 77: 570) concluded: 'Have too many of today's younger birdwatchers become obsessed with identification as an end in itself, whereas it should be the beginning?'.

In our opinion, 'real birdwatchers' are those who, while thoroughly enjoying *whatever* aspect of birds interests them, contribute in some way to ornithology. This may be by advancing the bounds of knowledge on identification, but not everyone is a Peter Grant or a Lars Svensson. It is more likely that a birdwatcher's contribution will be by membership of the BTO or the relevant local society or club, by sending in details of all observations to the appropriate local or national recorder, by taking a beginner 'under his or her wing', by ringing alone or as a member of a group, by helping with a census or survey, by carrying out an individual study, or, indeed, by doing anything which advances ornithology.

We also received correspondence on this subject from C. Davies (Lancashire), Don Taylor (Kent), A. J. B. Thompson (Northamptonshire) and Tim Vaughan (Merseyside). EDS

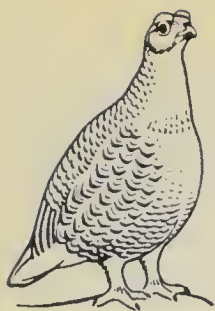


Announcement

Go away with 'BB' Provisional list of forthcoming overseas birding trips arranged in conjunction with the bird-tour company SUNBIRD:

August 1994	Volga Delta
February 1995	Israel
February-March 1995	Thailand
April 1995	Morocco
April-May 1995	Slovakia
June-July 1995	Iceland
July 1995	Seychelles
August 1995	Canary Islands
November-December 1995	The Gambia

All trips have a professional SUNBIRD leader and, if number of participants justifies a second leader, also a *BB* personality. *British Birds* subscribers are entitled to claim a 10% reduction on the full price of each of these trips. For full details of any of these trips, contact David Fisher/Jennifer Thomas, Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; tel. Sandy (0767) 682969; fax Sandy (0767) 692481.



Reviews

Birds of Skokholm. By Michael Betts. Bioline, for the Dyfed Wildlife Trust, Cardiff, 1992. 74 pages; 19 line-drawings; 76 histograms and graphs. ISBN 0-9520432-0-3. Paperback £4.50.

This book gives a concise, readable account of data gathered since Lockley began observations in 1933. Along similar lines to Dymond's *Birds of Lundy* and my *Birds of Bardsey*, information is readily comparable with that from these other west-coast islands.

Past and current status for all 262 species, histograms showing peak occurrence, and breeding totals for selected species over 45 years (1946-90) are given. The vignettes are poorly reproduced and there is some lack of detail compared with the Lundy and Bardsey books; only half the number of histograms, no reference to numbers of years of occurrence for migrants and no tabulated breeding bird data is regrettable. I was left unsure whether records earlier than 1933 exist – some records for the 1920s are mentioned, but not referenced – and I see no records that relate to Mathew (1894) in the bibliography.

This will, however, be useful for anyone needing an overview of the ornithological riches of this famous, attractive Welsh island. Closer scrutiny and comparison with similar published data for other bird observatories and migration hot-spots should interest everyone, from twitchers to students of bird migration and island avifaunas.

P. J. ROBERTS

Birds of Hampshire. Edited by J. M. Clark & J. A. Eyre. Hampshire Ornithological Society, Fleet, 1993. 512 pages; 36 colour plates; 4 black-and-white plates; 83 line-drawings; 96 distribution maps; 81 histograms; 81 tables. ISBN 0-9509805-1-X. £22.50.

When plans for this book were first discussed ten years ago, my intentions were to offer my services in any useful way possible. In the event, although I participated in the breeding survey, other commitments precluded me from any further involvement. I have, therefore, awaited its publication eagerly. My initial reaction on opening this book was one of considerable admiration. Clearly, a great deal of time, thought and hard work has been put into its planning, writing, editing and production, with the very highest standards in mind: it will delight the many who are sure to purchase it.

Chapters include 'An Introduction to Hampshire' by Colin Tubbs, 'Twentieth Century Ornithology in Hampshire' by Richard Leach and Norman Pratt, 'The Birdwatching Year' by John Eyre, followed by the systematic list, and, finally, a gazetteer, a list of Hampshire observers 1951-92, references (11 pages) and an index.

The systematic list runs to 425 pages, covering 348 species recorded in Hampshire. The accounts review the status of species from the last century up to the present day, recording fluctuations or marked changes, and in many cases putting this information into a national (or even international) context, including ringing recoveries. The texts are highly detailed, but eminently readable, not just listing facts and observations, but with considered and intelligent comments. Histograms and tables abound, and every one is pertinent. Hampshire has one of the longest series of regular wader and wildfowl counts of any British county, and the data are used to the full.

Associated with Hampshire's rich diversity of habitats is a wealth of rare birds or those with more specialised requirements, so there is much to interest those outside the county. For the first time since the 1910s, 'the true facts' are published on the New Forest Honey-buzzards *Pernis*

apivorus: including numbers of pairs, of nests and of breeding attempts, breeding success and productivity (133 young flew during 1954-92), causes of failure, and so on.

The breeding maps are the superbly presented result of a tetrad survey undertaken in 1986-91. This followed the methods of the first BTO *Atlas* (Sharrock 1976), and three sizes of red squares denote confirmed, probable and possible breeding. Where a species' breeding status has changed significantly over the years (e.g. Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*), additional symbols in paler red indicate this. For instance, the map for Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* shows the species' diminishing fortunes from 1939-60 to 1961-70 and to 1971-85 (Cirl no longer breeds in the county).

The magnificent colour photographs depict 15 habitats and 21 bird species, the latter generally being typical of the former.

This is a superb book of huge value both to present and to future birdwatchers. Of the many county avifaunas published in recent years, this is certainly one of the best, and perhaps *the* best: as John Taverner puts it in his Foreword, 'a model for county bird-books'. I congratulate all involved in this outstanding work, and strongly recommend that its format and method of presentation be studied very closely by those planning their own avifaunas.

DAVID A. CHRISTIE

Crows and Jays: a guide to the crows, jays and magpies of the world. By Steve Madge & Hilary Burn. Christopher Helm Publishers, London, 1993. 191 pages; 30 colour plates. ISBN 0-7136-3999-7. £25.95.

Intelligent, crafty and much maligned, the crow family is a fascinating group comprising birds that occur on every continent except Antarctica in habitats as diverse as tropical rain forest and desert. They range from the wheatear-sized Hume's Ground Jay *Pseudopodoces humilis* (45 g) to the largest of all passerine birds, the Thick-billed Raven *Corvus crassirostris* (1,500 g), and, in addition to the familiar monochrome species, some occur in dazzling colours (Turquoise Jay *Cyanolyca turcosa*, Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata*, Green Jay *Cyanocorax yncas*, cf. Brown Jay *Psilorhinus morio*, Grey Jay *Perisoreus canadensis* and Unicoloured Jay *Apheloconia unicolor*) and they include species with curly crests and long tails. Although crows are generally unpopular and many are considered to be pests, no fewer than 22 species are currently endangered.

Crows and Jays is the most recent in a series of what the publishers refer to as 'identification guides', although I cannot imagine that any birdwatcher would ever take even one of these guides to a particular family away with him or her. Nonetheless, like others in the series, this is a nice book to have as reference material—not least in the present case because every one of the 120 species of crow is illustrated in colour. There have been a number of previous books on the crow family, notably Derek Goodwin's *Crows of the World* (1976), but this is the first one to do this. *Crows and Jays* is divided into two basic sections. The beautiful and accurate plates painted by Hilary Burn are accompanied on the facing page by identification hints and a world distribution map (showing breeding, wintering and resident ranges). The systematic section provides a useful synopsis of each species, concentrating on identification features, including geographical variation, but also covering (mainly using secondary sources) the habits, breeding, habitat, distribution, and status.

The quality of production is generally high, although it is a pity that the publishers did not take a little more trouble: there are some very tight margins, the pages facing some plates are crowded, and a few of the maps could have been better printed. It is also clear that the publishers did not feel that this would be an important guide to further reading, since the bibliography is poorly produced and, like the index, is printed in unnecessarily tiny type. The author and artist, however, should be congratulated on producing a useful volume.

T. R. BIRKHEAD

Birds of Bahrain. By Tom Nightingale and Mike Hill. Immel Publishing, London 1993. 283 pages; 172 colour plates; 3 black-and-white plates. ISBN 0907151-79-5. £45.00.

This is not an identification guide, but a comprehensive account of the bird life of the smallest Arabian country—an island in the Arabian Gulf.

The main section is the systematic list, which covers the 294 species recorded in Bahrain. For each, the first paragraph deals with the global situation and the second details the bird's status in Bahrain in a very readable way, acknowledging all relevant observations. Another section deals with the breeding birds: only 20 species are known to breed, but include Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*, Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* and White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*. In addition, Bahrain has six introduced breeding species, with a further five that may breed; a study of their effect on the native residents would be extremely interesting.

The book is valuable for the visiting birdwatcher in outlining the main habitats, giving a monthly account of what can be seen, and notably including a chapter on the important sites, together with clear maps.

A nicely produced book, some fine photographs and presented in a very readable style.

RICHARD PORTER

The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Alberta. Edited by Glen P. Semenchuk. Federation of Alberta Naturalists, Edmonton, 1993. 400 pages; over 250 colour plates; 19 line-drawings; over 250 distribution maps. ISBN 0-9696134-0-7. C\$45.00.

With 6,623 10 km × 10 km squares (compared with the 3,862 in Britain and Ireland), and 943 atlassers (compared with approximately 10,000 here), there would be coverage problems even if there was ready road access throughout Alberta. The co-ordinators in Alberta nominated a 'priority squares' zone in each 20 km × 20 km block in the south, and one in each 100 km × 100 km plot in the north—one in four and one in 100, respectively). In these, a minimum of 20 hours of atlassing effort was required, with every habitat being visited, and 75% of expected species to be recorded, and breeding confirmed for at least 50% and probable breeding for a further 35%. Non-priority squares were also atlassed, usually in areas close to where observers lived, giving a final achievement of one-third of all squares being covered during the five-year survey period, 1987-91. Thus, it is essential when viewing this atlas always to bear in mind the survey coverage map, for huge swathes of the north of Alberta remain completely uncovered.

The results are shown by dot-distribution maps, but using filled dots, circles containing a cross and open circles in place of the usual, standard three sizes of dot. These are shown in black on top of six-colour maps showing 'natural regions' (a combination of vegetation zones, altitude and geology): Grassland, Parkland, Foothills, Boreal Forest, Rocky Mountain and Canadian Shield. One can, therefore, interpret the maps and extrapolate from the sometimes thin scattering of dots, for if there are even a few dots for a species within the vast Boreal Forest zone, for example, it is likely that the species occurs throughout that area.

The project started with the aim of recording not only breeding status, but also relative abundance, for all the breeding bird species. The first year's data showed, however, that information on the latter was being collected inconsistently, so the recording of relative-abundance information was suspended in the subsequent four years.

In the main body of the atlas, one page is devoted to each species, with a colour photograph and paragraphs on Status, Distribution, Habitat, Nesting and general Remarks, as well as the standard map already described.

Of obvious great interest to birders living in or visiting Alberta, this volume will also be of considerable value in showing the precise distributions in relation to the natural regions of this part of Canada. It would have been useful to have had the unsurveyed squares marked (perhaps with tiny dots) on each map, or transparent overlays provided showing them, to assist in interpretation of the distributions, particularly of the northernmost species. Unlike most other bird atlases, no counts are given of the number of squares in which each species was recorded (although there is space at the bottom left of each map where this could usefully have been inserted). I searched the map of Grey-checked Thrush *Catharus minimus* for some time before I spotted the remark in the text that: 'No records for this species were obtained during the atlas

project.' In comparison, there are many dots on the map for Swainson's Thrush *C. ustulatus*, and: 'It was recorded in 42% of surveyed squares in the Rocky Mountain region, 46% in the Foothills region, over 30% in the Canadian Shield and Boreal Forest regions, and 11% in the Parkland region', but the reader would need to count up the dots to discover the actual total (a figure which must surely have been readily available from the project's computer files).

The highest number of species (including non-breeding transients) recorded in any 10-km square was 227, and the highest number of breeding species in any square was 139. The most widespread breeding species was American Robin *Turdus migratorius*, found in 1,159 squares, followed by Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus* and Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*.
J. T. R. SHARROCK

Sjöfågelboken: fältbestämning av sträckande sjöfåglar. By Bertil Breife, Niklas Holmström & Lars Blomqvist.

(*I vår Fågelvärld* Supplement 18, Sveriges Ornitologiska Förening, Stenåsa, 1993. 208 pages. ISBN 91-88124-04-5. SKr 220) A field guide to all 86 species of migrating seabird—also including divers, grebes and wildfowl—recorded from the Swedish coastline (hence e.g. Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* is not included, but Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* and Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* are). Excellent species accounts, especially the paragraphs on shape, flight action, flying zone (i.e. in relation to surface and to coast) and flocking behaviour. Over 400 black-and-white flight photos provide an invaluable asset for all seawatchers. Highly recommended. DAC

Blackburn's Birds: the bird paintings of Jemima Blackburn. Edited by Rob Fairley.

(Canongate Press, Edinburgh, 1993. 112 pages. ISBN 0-86241-436-9. £25.00) This book came as a revelation. I knew her name, but little else, certainly not the rare talent that has been hidden from us for too long. Jemima Blackburn lived from 1823 to 1909, mostly in Scotland. She outshone many of her better-known contemporary bird painters because of her main method of working—directly from life. Her work is fresh, lively and accurate, particularly the sketches and studies. The more-finished work is delightfully composed and decorative. Rob Fairley has researched Jemima Blackburn for ten years and already published a full biography. After a fascinating introduction to a remarkable woman, we are treated to over 50 colour plates, with texts taken largely from her two most successful books, *Birds from Nature* and *Birds from Moidart*.

ROBERT GILLMOR

Bird Population Studies: relevance to conservation and management. Edited by C. M. Perrins, J.-D. Lebreton & G. J. M. Hiron.

(Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993. 683 pages; numerous line illustrations and tables. ISBN 0-19-854082-5. Paperback £25.00) Published in hardback in 1991, now available in paperback. Contains 30 contributions from European and North American authors concerning the dynamics of avian population change, and the way such studies can be applied, particularly to bird conservation. Important information and ideas, of increasing relevance as more bird species approach local or global extinction, make this book well worthy of the wider readership that a cheaper format may bring. Of special value are the concluding papers, which summarise global problems of bird conservation and discuss how knowledge of the dynamics of populations, particularly small ones, may help in defining conservation priorities and in devising practical and effective strategies for averting future extinctions. JOHN MARCHANT

Tranan: studier i en euroasiatiska tranans biologi. By P. O. Swanberg, Kjell Bylin and others.

(*I vår Fågelvärld* Supplement 17, Sveriges Ornitologiska Förening, Stockholm, 1993. 167 pages. ISBN 91-88124-03-7. SKr 220) The life of the Common Crane *Grus grus*, and the most up-to-date work on this charismatic bird. The Swedish text (with brief chapter summaries in English) reveals an intimate knowledge of and genuine enthusiasm for the species, written with feeling yet with no loss of scientific objectivity. For most people, the appeal will lie in the many original photographs (colour and black-and-white), some of them quite superb. What a splendid book! DAC

Brown-headed Cowbird in Strathclyde: new to Britain and Ireland



Clive R. McKay

Along with my companion, Sue Crosthwaite, I spent the afternoon of 24th April 1988 making observations on the feeding behaviour and movements of Red-billed Choughs *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax* at Ardnave Point, Islay, Strathclyde, as part of my PhD project. We were positioned on opposite shores of Loch Gruinart, a sea-loch at the northern end of the island; with the aid of CB radios we were attempting to track birds as they commuted backwards and forwards between two dune systems on either side of the loch (a distance of 1 km as the chough flies, but 26 km by road). The winds had been from the easterly quarter for the previous two days, and we both noted the presence of several 'out-of-habitat' migrant Goldcrests *Regulus regulus*.

Throughout the afternoon, I followed a flock of up to ten choughs as they fed in an extensive area of heavily sheep- and cattle-grazed dune pasture. At one point, I saw a single 'starling *Sturnus*' out of the corner of my eye, and made a mental note to check it later, as I was busy reading chough colour-rings. It seemed a little unusual to see a lone starling just there, as they do not breed nearby and the area is very exposed; when one does meet with them, they are usually in bustling flocks. My pursuit of choughs took me in a different direction, however, and I forgot to check out the 'lone starling' and would have thought nothing more of it, but for subsequent events.

I finished making chough observations at 17.30 and radioed SC to tell her that I would pick her up at 18.00. Walking back through the dune pasture, I noticed a starling-like bird feeding less than 15 m from the track. At this range, with my naked eye, I could see that the bird looked like a very dark 'spotless' starling, and, ever the optimist, thought that I had better check it out, 'just in case'. The bird was in exactly the same place as the lone 'starling' that I had noted there some three hours earlier, and was almost certainly the same bird.

As soon as I looked at the bird through my 10 × 40 binoculars, I knew

that it was something odd, and thoughts of Spotless Starling *S. unicolor* flashed through my mind, until I saw that it had a brownish head and short finch-like bill. It was obviously a species with which I was completely unfamiliar—and therefore probably from the Nearctic, which I have never visited. It was strange to be able to communicate the excitement to SC more or less immediately via the CB radio, yet most frustrating that she was half-an-hour away by road—and I had the car. I watched the bird for about 30 minutes, using binoculars and 20-60 × 75 telescope, and took a hasty field description. As there was perhaps only an hour to go before dusk, I then had to decide between fetching SC, and contacting other birders on the island in the process, or getting my camera and 200-mm lens from the car to obtain photographs of the bird. Against SC's advice, I plumped for the former. There was no time to lose: at 18.15 the light was still good, but we were already into that late-afternoon period when everything goes quiet.

I rushed down the road and called on Pete Moore, warden of the RSPB Loch Gruinart reserve. I breathlessly told him about the bird, and knowing that he was not too keen on rarities (unusually for an RSPB warden!) I tried to emphasise how important it was that a second person at least witnessed the bird, as it might be a first for Europe. Unfortunately, he was just about to have his Sunday dinner, and the bird would have to wait. I asked PM to alert other birders on the island by phone, but he found that no-one else was around. A glance through PM's literature gave no clue as to the bird's identity. I then rushed around Loch Gruinart and picked up SC, a round trip of about 26 km. At 18.50, we arrived back at Ardnave at the same time as PM. Despite the light still being favourable, the dunes had become very quiet, and we failed to find the bird; presumably it had gone to roost. I could not find it the next day, and it was not seen again.

Jizz and feeding behaviour

In general appearance, the bird was like a small starling with a short, black, finch-like bill. It had a metallic bronze-coloured head and throat, the rest of the body plumage being black with a green iridescence. It walked and ran across the pasture in the manner of a Common Starling *S. vulgaris*, with similar back-and-forth movements of the head. Likewise, it associated with grazing cattle, though much more closely (see below). Flight shape was similar to that of Common Starling, but its movements were more erratic, resembling those of Redwing *Turdus iliacus*. It would not have looked out of place in a flock of Common Starlings. There were, however, no other birds in the vicinity, so no interspecific comparisons were possible.

At all times, it associated very closely with the cattle which were grazing in the area. It often walked and fed unconcernedly between the legs of cows, and, if it strayed more than about 10 m from a beast, it would hurriedly fly back to it, as if correcting a mistake. This relationship was so striking that I guessed that the bird might be a cowbird *Molothrus*, though I knew nothing at the time about their appearance or the derivation of their name, only that they were a group of New World brood-parasites. My interpretation of this association with cattle was that the bird used the cows as 'moving cover' in an otherwise featureless environment. The bird did not appear to feed any more

successfully when closer to the cattle, nor did it appear to feed on insects disturbed by the animals' hooves. In fact, it fed on grain for much of the time, which was presumably no more available close to the cattle than farther away from them.

The bird employed two feeding methods: (1) picking insects from the pasture surface following a short flight or run (but not sub-surface probing as by Common Starling); and (2) picking seeds (mostly barley/oats from cattle-feed spread in the area) from the pasture surface and dehusking them by rotating them in the bill in a bunting/finch-like manner.

Detailed description

SIZE Though no direct comparisons were possible, it appeared to be a little smaller than a Common Starling, about the size of a Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* though not so robust.

STRUCTURE Similar proportions to Common Starling in terms of medium leg length, medium-short square-ended tail, and medium-long wings. Unlike Common Starling, bill short, conical and quite pointed, like that of a finch or bunting. Head shape, therefore, more finch-like.

BARL PARTS Bill black. Eyes dark, possibly slightly paler than darkish mask surrounding eyes (but could not be certain on this point). Legs brownish-black.

PLUMAGE Head, nape and throat metallic bronze-brown, with hint of a darker mask

between bill and eye. Brown head fairly sharply demarcated from the rest of body plumage, which was black with a glossy, bottle-green sheen on both the upperparts and underparts. Tail black. Close inspection showed the exposed fringes of the primaries to be brownish, and the tips of the greater coverts to be slightly paler than the rest of the wing. The latter appeared to be produced by a (difficult-to-describe) reflection of light from the tips of the feathers rather than by an actual coloration of them. In some lights, a similar type of 'reflection' gave the dark plumage a sealy appearance, particularly around the lower body/vent.

CALL None heard.

darker mask between bill and eye

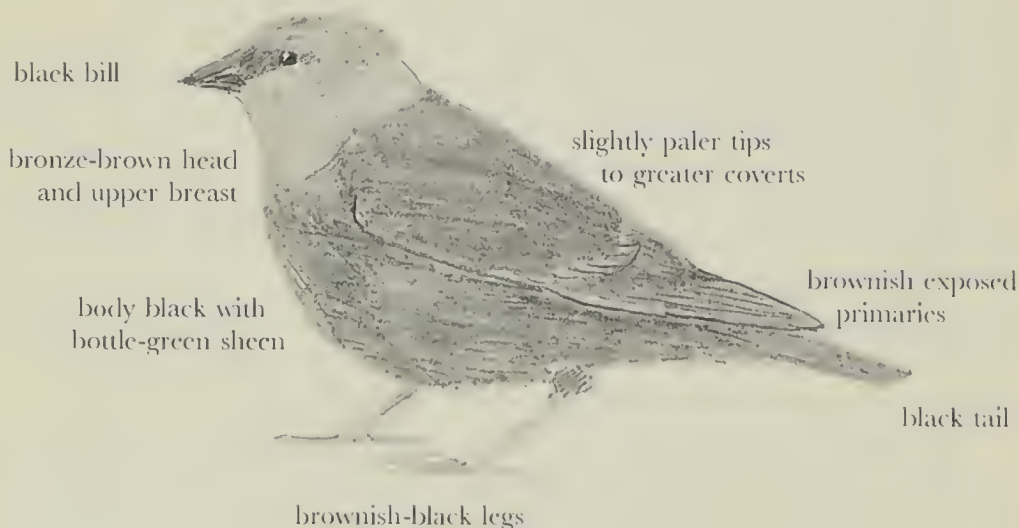


Fig. 1. Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*, Strathclyde, April 1988. CRM's comments: 'proportions of this illustration are not very accurate, but were transposed more or less directly from original field drawing. The illustration completely fails to give an impression of the "metallic" nature of the plumage: the bronze sheen of the brown head and the bottle-green sheen on the black plumage. Primary projection looks a little too long also, and the legs too short and bunting-like'

(Clive R. McKay)

Identification

The bird's identity remained a mystery until I was able to refer to the Islay Natural History Trust's library with Dr Malcolm Ogilvie a few days later. I first described the bird to MAO, and then looked up the index of the National Geographic Society *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (1983). Under the heading of 'cowbird' were only two species: Bronzed *Molothrus aeneus* and Brown-headed *M. ater*. Before looking at the illustrations, I suggested that the latter was the more likely candidate, and this was what it proved to be: a male, probably first-year. I was relieved that there were no similar species with which male Brown-headed Cowbird could be confused.

Background from the literature

The Brown-headed Cowbird evidently does get its name from its habit of associating closely with cattle. Indeed, it was once known as the 'Buffalo Bird', before 'buffaloes' (American bison *Bison bison*) were virtually exterminated in the USA. It is common in pastoral and residential areas in North America and Canada. From its size, this bird probably belonged either to the nominate race or to the race *artemisiae*, which breed from British Columbia to Newfoundland and from California to Georgia respectively (BOU 1993). These races winter in the southern part of the breeding range, from California in the west and New England in the east, south to Mexico and Florida. They return to their northern breeding grounds from late March onwards. Apparently they have a good homing ability, returning successfully to their breeding sites following displacements of up to 1,000 km. Bent (1958) quoted Bendire as saying that, in 1895, one was 'blown out to sea and came aboard a vessel fully 1,000 miles [1,600 km] east of Newfoundland.'

Brown-headed Cowbirds feed on a mixture of animal and vegetable matter. They are brood-parasites, laying non-mimetic eggs in the nests of a wide range of other birds (over 200 host species recorded). The Brown-headed Cowbird is currently increasing in North America. There is one previous record from the Western Palearctic: an adult female found dead in Telemark, Norway, on 1st June 1987 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 12: 106).

The Islay record was accepted by both the British Birds Rarities Committee (*Brit. Birds* 86: 536) and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (*Ibis* 135: 496).

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Clive R. McKay, 442 Sheffield Road, Tinsley, Sheffield S9 1RR

When making his predictions of transatlantic vagrancy to Europe, Chandler S. Robbins (*Brit. Birds* 73: 456) excluded Brown-headed Cowbird from the analysis because the species was 'captured so infrequently at all stations [Manomet, Massachusetts; Island Beach, New Jersey; Kiptopeke Beach, Virginia] during the autumn' and commented that it was a short-distance

diurnal migrant and probably not a prime candidate for transatlantic passage. He noted, however, that it had been seen more than 110 km offshore from New England in mid October 1971.

R. A. Hume (Chairman, British Birds Rarities Committee) and Dr Alan G. Knox (Chairman, BOC Records Committee) have commented as follows:

'In the USA, Brown-headed Cowbirds form large, lively flocks, often mixed with other American blackbirds (Icteridae) and Common Starlings, in fields and around muddy cattle-pens. They frequently feed in a characteristic head-down, tail-up pose and look intensely black except at close range, when more detail can be discerned.

'Females are grey-brown and immatures are slightly paler with softly streaked underparts, while first-year males in moult have patchy, black-and-brown patterns. Male Rusty Blackbirds *Euphagus carolinus* and Brewer's Blackbirds *E. cyanocephalus* are larger and black-headed, with finer bills and strikingly pale eyes, Brewer's having purple reflections on the head. All grackles *Quiscalus* are much bigger and longer-tailed. There are no obvious escaped cage-bird confusion species and the only other potential problem, a distant Common Starling in the 'brown-headed' stage between juvenile and first-winter plumage, is ruled out by date, the thick bill and the plumage detail. Neither committee had difficulty in accepting the identification.

'Male Brown-headed Cowbirds arrive back on their northernmost breeding grounds from early April, so the timing of the Islay record is satisfactory. Although this is an abundant species in eastern North America and increasing in numbers, it is a relatively short-distance migrant. Nevertheless, the record fits the spring occurrence pattern of other short-distance migrants from the Nearctic in Britain. Quite what this pattern means is not clear (Parkin & Knox in press). While Brown-headed Cowbird did not feature on lists of species which appeared on transatlantic ships in the 1960s (*Brit. Birds* 56: 157-164; 65: 428-442), ship-assistance cannot be excluded for the Islay bird.

'So far as the possibility of escape from captivity is concerned, given the normal range of this species it is likely to be traded only from Mexico. With the ban on the export of birds from that country since September 1982, it is unlikely to occur very often. Birds of Mexican origin do, however, still appear as imports from the Netherlands and Germany: this species was seen in the Antwerp bird market in 1989 (L. Janssen per P. Herroelen). Prior to 1982, the indications were that this species was not in demand, at least in the UK. No imports into the UK were reported between 1980 and 1991 (World Conservation Monitoring Centre & TRAFFIC International, 1993, *Review of UK Imports of non-CITES fauna from 1980-91*, JNCC). Although the size of the Islay bird suggests that it was probably not of the race *obscurus* from southwest USA and Mexico (*Ibis* 135: 496), birds of the two northern races winter as far south as Mexico. Altogether, it is believed that Brown-headed Cowbirds are not common in captivity.

'On balance, the BOURC considered that natural occurrence was more likely than escape from captivity and Brown-headed Cowbird was admitted to category A of the British and Irish List (*Ibis* 135: 496).' Eds



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'The status of the Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*. In 1967 about 230 pairs summered in England, an increase of 46% since 1962. The proportion of pairs north of a line from the Welland to the Severn increased from 41% in 1962 to 49% in 1967 and the species spread to north Yorkshire and Durham (as well as to Northumberland and Scotland in 1968). Despite the higher number of pairs and the spread into new areas, the rate of increase may be slowing down.' (*Brit. Birds* 62: 223, June 1969)

'Fair Isle's new bird observatory . . . will be a system-built timber building costing £51,000 (excluding site services) and will provide accommodation for 24 visitors in single and double rooms, plus dormitories at cheaper rates for young enthusiasts; a bird-ringing room, laboratory, darkroom and library are included.' (*Brit. Birds* 62: 246, June 1969)



Bonxies, barnacles and bleached blondes

W. R. P. Bourne and W. F. Curtis

The large skuas of the genus *Catharacta** are easily watched at the breeding places, but it is more difficult to study the non-breeding birds in immature and winter plumages and their activities while they are away at sea. This attracted little attention when it was thought that the different forms all fed by predation and parasitism, and had separate ranges. Since it was found that, where their ranges overlap, they tend to have differences in their ecology, but may hybridise, and that at least the southernmost breeders may carry out transequatorial migrations (Devillers 1977; Parmelee 1985, 1988), they have received more attention, without clarifying their status. It may therefore be useful to record an alternative view, based on 40 years of Royal Naval Bird-watching Society (RNBWS) Sea Reports and experience at sea.

Distribution and diet

These skuas must have the widest range of any birds. McCormick's Skua† *C. maccormicki* appears to occur throughout the oceans (fig. 1), it has been suggested that another southern form has been seen off New Jersey (Brady 1988), and the subantarctic Brown Skua *C. skua lonnbergi* has been collected north to Somalia (Ash 1983). The much-ringed northern Great Skua (or Bonxie) *C. s. skua* is known to disperse most widely in its second year, reaching tropical Africa and South America in the winter, and the Arctic in the

* *British Birds* and the BOU continue to follow Voous (1977, *List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species*) by including all the skua species within the genus *Stercorarius*. EDS

†The name 'South Polar Skua' seems singularly clumsy and unsuitable for a bird that only rarely reaches the South Pole (Halle 1973), but disperses to the northern limit of open water (Salomonsen 1976), and it may be better to continue to use the original one agreeing with the inalienable scientific name commemorating its discoverer. There is an application before the International Commission for Zoological Nomenclature for the suppression of the scientific name *Stercorarius madagascariensis*, which would otherwise have priority for one of the southern skuas (Voisin *et al.* 1993), though it is still uncertain which (Bourne *et al.* in press).

summer, and after maturing and returning to the breeding sites it still makes more limited movements to winter in lower latitudes (Furness 1987). Most occur in areas of marine turbulence with a high biological productivity over and off the continental shelves and between water masses out at sea, but they are also widespread elsewhere at sea throughout the year; thus, for example, four were still present in mid-ocean when WRPB crossed the North Atlantic between 40 and 50°N in June 1985.

During over 30 voyages north or south between Ascension, the Falklands, and South Georgia in the South Atlantic during 1982-90 (table 1), it was found that large skuas were scarce far out to sea in the southern breeding area, where they appear to be mainly summer visitors from October to April (Bourne & Curtis 1985), feeding locally by predation and scavenging around colonies of marine mammals and birds and by fishing, the Brown Skua becoming the predator and scavenger, and McCormick's Skua fishing, where they occur together around the Antarctic Peninsula (Parmelee 1985). Elsewhere, they appear to be seen mainly on migration, except where they occur throughout the year along the biologically productive subtropical convergence between 40°S and 50°S (table 1).

There is ample plankton, fish, squid, birds, the food that they disgorge, and offal discarded by fishing-boats in the areas frequented by most large skuas at



Fig. 1. Recoveries of large skuas *Catharacta* (*Stercorarius*) ringed in the vicinity of the Antarctic Peninsula, and northern specimens of similar birds

CIRCLES = ringing area and recoveries of *C. macormicki*, probably including one off Guadelupe reported as *C. s. lombergi*, though the southern control in Brazil was a fertile hybrid between these two forms (Hudson 1968; Ali & Ripley 1969; Parmelee 1985, 1988), and a fledgling ringed on King George Is. in the South Shetlands in Feb. 1991 reported by Wayne Trivelpiece to have been found dead on a beach near Dakar, Senegal, the next July.

SQUARES = specimens, often immatures (Kuroda 1962; Salomonsen 1976; Devillers 1977; Lee & Booth 1979; Jensen 1982; Powers 1983; Lee 1989; Bourne 1989). The month of recovery is shown to the right of the symbols, the minimum age in years of ringed birds over a year old to the left. There are apparently also recoveries, possibly from other populations, from Australasia (Eklund 1964)

Table 1. Large skuas *Catharacta* (or *Stercorarius*) *skua/macconnicki* seen in the central South Atlantic during 1982-90

The observations, which usually lasted several hours a day, were made away from land by Curtis, Bourne, members of the Royal Naval Bird-watching Society, and other correspondents. They are divided into sections each lasting several days while crossing ten degrees of latitude, and in addition voyages above 50°S have been divided into those to the south of the Falklands (F), those crossing the Antarctic Convergence between the Falklands and South Georgia to the east (G), and a trip by Bourne to and from the Antarctic Peninsula in March. Most of those seen resembled Great Skuas *C.* (or *S.*) *skua*, and asterisks indicate those reported as McCormick's Skuas *C.* (or *S.*) *macconnicki*. Much larger numbers were also to be seen around the Falklands and South Georgia from October to April, where most left from May to September, except for 18 seen by Curtis near ice 20 nm (37 km) north of South Georgia on 14th June 1982

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
VOYAGES													
0-60° S	1-3	2-4	-	2-3	4	1	-	7	4	2-3	1-4	2	26-35
S Georgia	3	8	4	6	1	3	1	1	2	1	3	3	36
BIRDS													
0-10° S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10-20° S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
20-30° S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
30-40° S	-	3	-	1	1	-	-	1	2	-	5	3	16
40-50° S	3	3	-	5**	6**	-	-	5	13	9	8	-	52
50-60° S(F)	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	13
50-60° S(G)	4**	7*	2*	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	-	18
60+°S	-	-	2**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

sea. It was, however, puzzling to know what the ones occasionally seen in the barren centres of the oceans could be eating. Eventually, WRPB passed a large skua sitting by a piece of driftwood and picking at it in the central South Atlantic where no bird had been seen for days, and remembered that a Great Skua collected over the shelfbreak west of Ireland had eaten many goose-barnacles *Lepas anatifera* when other birds were taking fish and squid (Bourne 1986). Thus, it seems likely that, as reported by Furness (1987) at the breeding stations and by Sanger (1973) for Herring *Larus argentatus* and Glaucous-winged Gulls *L. glaucescens* in the North Pacific, when food is scarce they may take the goose-barnacles attached to drifting objects, which must help them to disperse so widely at sea (fig. 1).

Appearance

It is remarkable that, although many recent authors, including Devillers (1977, 1978), Veit (1978), Baleh (1981), Harrison (1983, 1987), van den Berg (1987), Eigenhuis (1987), Brady (1988), Grant (1988), McGeehan (1991), Gantlett & Harrap (1992), and Lansdown (1993a, b), have discussed the appearance of the large skuas, few have emphasised a phenomenon which is also shown by the shearwaters (Yésou *et al.* 1990): fading of the plumage. While dense black and dark brown feather pigments withstand exposure to ultraviolet light and protect the feather, paler pigments fade faster, and the feather then wears more rapidly. Thus, while the dark low-latitude populations of large skuas do not appear to fade much, this does seem to have much more effect on the appearance of the paler southern McCormick's Skuas, which are exposed to more ultraviolet light.

This was apparently discussed first by Edward Wilson (1907), in his report on birds seen around the Ross Sea during Scott's first expedition of 1901-03. He remarked (p. 66):

'The variety of colouring of this skua was very noticeable at Cape Adare, where we landed for a few hours on January 9th (1902). The colouring of the head, neck and breast varies from a very light buff or almost white, to a dark rich brown . . .',

and continued (p. 67):

'On January 31st . . . we procured three skuas, which on the same day provided us with examples of the two extremes of colour variation and an intermediate form. One bird [the only extreme dark-phase one he collected] was uniformly dark all over, another was weathered and bleached, with an almost white head and breast and white splashes on the back and mantle, while the third was a stage between the two. This variability has nothing whatever to do with sex, but much to do with age and moult. The moult which replaces the bleached and whitened feathers is apparently more complete and rapid in the young than it is in the older birds.'

He then discussed the situation month by month (p. 74), reporting:

'When the birds first came south to McMurdo Sound in November, it was exceptional to see one in the bleached and weathered phase of plumage. Most of them were in the dark plumage . . . [a few] very white and weathered on the head, breast and mantle. In December the birds are nesting . . . the light and dark phases paired together. One may also still see the exceptionally weathered birds in a plumage now completing its second year, and these may be of either sex. But the more usual phase is the darker one with slightly weathered plumage, since the summer sun rapidly takes effect in bleaching the plumage . . . Of the eight skins procured in this month six were much weathered, two were moulting, and one had already completed the moult . . . [By March the situation is much as in] October, though there is a greater freshness in the dark brown of the moulted adults and young. Here and there, again, as in October, one may see a bird which has not changed its plumage, showing pale and weathered among the moulted birds.

'Even the oldest adults are dark when freshly moulted . . . and apart from evidences of age in the beak and claws, there seem to be no definite age characteristics, except possibly, in the straw-coloured collar, which has been considered of some value in the distinction of this species. The development of this collar varies a good deal; in some birds it is very marked, but in others absent, and it is in the older birds, both male and female, in the white and weathered phase of plumage, that the golden tips which do not fade show to greater advantage. In a young adult the pale straw-coloured tips of the dark neck feathers are hardly visible, and in a bird of the first year there is no sign of them at all . . .'

This statement, supported by at least 19 specimens in the Natural History Museum, was generally accepted at first (Murphy 1936; Watson 1975), until the distribution of the polymorphism was investigated by Kuroda (1962) and Falla (1964), who concluded that a pale phase predominates on the Antarctic continent, and a dark one around the Antarctic Peninsula. Devillers (1977) then reported:

'Adelie Land breeders [in the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris] are relatively fresh in December after the partial spring moult, and very worn by March. Wear eliminates much of the golden mane, and some bleaching takes place, particularly of the upper parts. No spectacular lightening during the season is evident, as some of the lightest birds are found among the early captures . . . Gain's (1914) impression (that the birds fade) can certainly be explained by his voyage through regions occupied by various colour phases.'

Most subsequent authors have failed to consider fading further.

In fact, two fledglings in the Natural History Museum taken on 18th February 1899 from one of the palest populations breeding on Cape Adare, Victoria Land, have uniform medium grey-brown plumage with only narrow pale feather edges on the upper back, and, while very grey, are little paler

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than other young skuas. Numerous paler adults, some taken with these fledglings, have dark underwings and feather-bases to the body plumage of the same colour as the plumage of the fledglings, although the outer parts of the feathers exposed to the light are bleached almost white. Wayne Trivelpiece (*in litt.*) also reports that around the Antarctic Peninsula, where most of them are dark, 'even the paler skuas at our site have chicks with plumage that is much darker than their parents. Our banded chicks first reappear around the clubs when they are three years of age, and at that time they are still in a darker, more uniformly brown plumage than the older adult breeders. [They] gradually lighten and get streakier as they age . . .'.

Obvious pale McCormick's Skuas in table 1 are reported only between January and May. Both of us have also seen pied individuals in a flock of skuas frequenting Choiseul Sound on the south coast (but nowhere else) in the Falklands at this time. In 1992, WFC found that they increased from 10-20 individuals in early January to 50-80 in late March/early April. They included some obvious McCormick's Skuas, such as two very pale individuals on 27th March, and varying numbers of other extremely pale-bodied and confusing birds. WFC noted:

'The first bird seen on 1st January was smallish with a quite pale, uniform neck and breast shading to a darker lower belly. The nape was very pale, the head pale except for a very dark, distinctive cap, the back and wings dark, and the bill large. Another on the 13th was similar with creamy brown underparts and occasional slightly darker flecks along the flanks. By late February there were at least 7, and by 4th March at least 16, pied birds out of 40.

'The structure and build of one of the last on 4th May was more reminiscent of a Pomarine *Stercorarius pomarinus* than a Great Skua, though the body was bulkier, appearing deeper-bellied rather than deep- and barrel-chested like a Pomarine, and the flight showed similarities to both species. The underparts were creamy greyish-brown with no speckling or darker blotches on the flanks, extending on to the vent. The face, chin, nape, neck and upper mantle were similar, the last shading quickly to dark brownish-black with occasional paler (golden brown) feathers. There was a prominent dark "skull cap" extending to eye level, though it was not as cold in tone as the wings. There was a clean division between the pale body and dark wings, which were cold brownish-black with prominent white flashes on the primaries and a pale line along the underwing coverts. The wings were broad-based with a relatively pointed hand, not the blunter end of a typical Bonxie. The bill, legs and feet were black with a hint of slaty-blue towards the end of the bill, which was deep and large, as in a Bonxie.'

Doubtless these birds, like those seen by Wilson (1907) in areas where sometimes the species did not breed in the Ross Sea, were immatures, which are known to wander (Eklund 1964), and seem likely to start the autumn moult early. Some of them may then move north in intermediate plumage, and the RNBWS has less detailed reports of pied skuas throughout the oceans, where McCormick's may sometimes have been confused with Pomarine Skuas. Gantlett & Harrap (1992) also included some photographs of birds of this type taken off eastern North America in May, showing faded old upperparts on one (their figure 21), and early body moult and a developing cap on another (figures 22 & 23, which from the development of the primaries appear to involve the same individual).

Kuroda (1962) also found that, with a number of McCormick's Skuas which appear to have been in more advanced moult taken off Hokkaido, Japan:

'May birds . . . have many neck feathers completely worn white, which may also be found scattered on the breast and flanks where new feathers are replacing them. New feathers are also



78 & 79. Skua *Catharacta* (or *Stercorarius*), probably McCormick's Skua *C.* (or *S.*) *maccornicki*, at sea off Scilly, 26th August 1993 (J. F. Ryan); see page 296



growing on the side of the head. The white feathers decrease in June specimens, and in a specimen of late July there are no more white worn feathers on the head to underparts, only a few white ones remaining on the hind neck. The upper mantle is in moult, some new feathers being in sheath, but the scapulars and lower back as well as the wing coverts and tail are still in old worn plumage . . . [a dark] specimen obtained in late May had acquired almost completely new feathers . . . apparently, [with these the] old feathers [never become] worn white even on the neck, and are rather indistinguishable from newly grown ones.'

Another (pale?) captive did not moult until late August-September, when the head became blackish-brown.

In the Atlantic, Jensen (1982) reported that two collected at 47°N 45°W on the Flemish Cap 300 nm east of Newfoundland in early August 1978:

'differed from [*C. s. skua*] in that they were plain dark brown except for the head, which although plain brown was [lighter than the rest] . . . the wings are almost pure dark brown without the distinctive light stripe to be seen in the Great Skua, the tail brownish-black, stomach, breast, and neck greyish-brown, the head and back of the neck lighter, but the feathers very worn. The sides and breast are in heavy moult, the tail recently moulted except for the secondmost outer feathers on both sides which are half grown. The shoulder feathers are all new, and most of the upper wing feathers are new. The four [outer primaries] are growing, and measure from the outside 2.5, 6, 10 and 20 cm; the bird must have had difficulty in flying . . .'

An immature female McCormick's Skua taken in the Faroes on 28th September 1889 (Bourne 1989) differed from young Great Skuas mainly in its small size and state of moult.

Discussion

It is curious that, although McCormick's Skua may have become the most widespread bird in the world because it eats barnacles, it has seldom been noticed because it changes its appearance during the moult. Perhaps, as with Arctic animals, it may be advantageous for it to become paler in the polar regions, not only for concealment against the snow when it is hunting, but also because less heat is lost by radiation from pale surfaces. It has seemed evident for over a decade that it is likely to reach the Western Palearctic, yet, despite considerable discussion, this has not yet been recognised by most of the authorities responsible for recording the local avifauna.

The reason must lie in the attitude revealed by Hoogendoorn *et al.* (1993), who asserted:

'an observer positioned on the western European seaboard may confidently identify a distant, heavy-looking, short-tailed skua with conspicuous wing-flashes as a Great Skua. However, he should not expect a claim of South Polar Skua to be taken seriously unless it is supported by evidence of much more critical observation.'

Unfortunately, McCormick's Skua shows few diagnostic features at sea, which seem widely misunderstood, so that, as with too many other reports of rarities, most of the information provided in support of identifications is liable to be (in W. S. Gilbert's immortal words in *The Mikado*) 'mere corroborative detail intended to give artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative'.

A different approach seems necessary. This is not really a question of whether McCormick's Skua should appear on various lists, but of the true status of this otherwise ubiquitous seabird (fig. 1) in the Western Palearctic. Until this is clarified, it has become impossible to accept the specific identification of *any* large skua away from the breeding-places, even by

omniscient Dutch birders, so that it seems time that, instead of listing all such birds uncritically as Great Skuas, they refrain from identifying large skuas specifically until it can be proved that they are not McCormick's Skuas.

It is strange, if McCormick's Skua has a pale phase, that so few have been reported returning south off Europe, and it has been suggested that even these may be pale Great Skuas (Grant 1988; Lansdown 1993b). In fact, the first pale individual, seen off Brittany on 26th September 1973 by Bourne (1986), had a very much paler head and body than the pale Great Skuas shown in photographs, which WRPB would have considered normal variations, so that it already attracted attention long before it was suggested that McCormick's Skua might reach the North Atlantic (or he might have made more notes!). Presumably, the new plumage of pale McCormick's Skuas must normally be darker, so that they have been overlooked among the Great Skuas.

A possible example is quoted by Saunders (1876):

'I have examined the interesting melanism belonging to Mr J. H. Gurney jun., figured by Mr Dresser in his *Birds of Europe*, it was obtained in October, and the first primary of each wing has not yet attained its full length. From the crescentic edges of the dorsal feathers, seen on holding it to a side light, from the absence of acuminate feathers on the neck, and from the weak bill (which is much thinner than in Mr Dresser's plate), I have little doubt of this example being a bird of the year; this impression is confirmed by the satin-like appearance of the primaries and upperparts, which is very different from anything I have ever observed in birds whose plumage has undergone any wear.'

According to Stevenson & Southwell (1890):

'It was said to have been killed at Yarmouth in the month of October 1869, and purchased by the late Mr John Gatcombe in Leadenhall Market. In October 1870 Mr John Gurney jun. saw another in the same market, also said to have been sent from Yarmouth.'

WRPB also still wonders if two large, uniformly dark grey skuas with dark underwings seen briefly off Brittany on 4th September 1988 and off Orkney on 27th June 1989 (Bourne 1989) could also have been McCormick's Skuas in fresher plumage. Judging by these observations and what is known of the size of the populations concerned, it seems possible that McCormick's Skuas may perhaps be present among the Great Skuas occurring off the west coast of Europe in the autumn in a proportion of the order of one in hundreds.

Evidence that these birds change colour during the moult and that they do occur off western Europe has now been provided by two photographs (plates 78 & 79) by John Ryan of a skua seen at 49°23'N 06°45'W, 50 miles (90 km) SW of the Isles of Scilly, on 26th August 1993* (Evans & Millington 1993). While it has the general build and large wing-flash of a Great Skua, most of its plumage is a paler and more uniform grey, showing the dark concealed underwing and bleached plumage, including prominent pale feather-edges on the back, characteristic of pale McCormick's Skuas (Gantlett & Harrap 1992). While some dark markings on the head may be due to pollution, they seem more likely to be darker new feathers, matching those of the underwing, as in those moulting in the Falklands.

Thus, in the northern oceans, McCormick's Skua may most often be found either masquerading as a scruffy 'peroxide blonde' moving north in the west in spring, or as a uniformly dark stranger returning south in glossy new plumage in the east in the autumn.

* This occurrence was submitted in February 1994 for assessment by the British Birds Rarities Committee and the BOU Records Committee and is still under consideration. Eds

Some young individuals may not moult until they are over a year old, and older ones may not moult every year, so that there may also still be a few blondes about in the autumn as well. The species appears to loiter far out to sea over the edge of the Continental Shelf, as do the large shearwaters, but in much smaller numbers, seldom coming inshore to allow 'proper' identification, liable to reveal that it is genetically impure. It is most easily identified if, while it is changing plumages, there is a contrast in their colour (which is probably more reliable than the well-known date of its primary moult). It is hardly surprising that the Rarity Police were so embarrassed by the way that they overlooked such a disreputable alien for so long that they have tried to suppress all information about its occurrence.

Acknowledgments

We are indebted to the late Bob Falla and Pierre Devillers, who first tried to explain these birds to WRPB, and to John Croxall, Bob Furness, Dave Lee, Wayne Trivelpiece, and the Royal Naval Bird-watching Society, for information.

Summary

The large skuas perform similar movements in the North and South Atlantic, breeding with and preying upon colonies of marine birds and mammals in high latitudes, and then dispersing widely at sea at other times, where they may feed on the goose-barnacles *Lepas anatifera* attached to flotsam when there is a shortage of other food. At least McCormick's (or South Polar) Skua *Catharacta (Stercorarius) macormicki* regularly crosses the equator, and previous failure to notice it around the Western Palearctic may be due to the way in which the distinctive pale colour of some individuals is due to fading of the feathers, which are replaced by darker plumage when they moult. Photographs recently taken off Britain (plates 78 & 79) appear to show one of these pale birds starting to moult into darker plumage.

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Diary dates

This list covers July 1994 to June 1995

28th July to 12th August SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission £2.00 (free to SWLA members).

12th-18th August BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL 21ST WORLD CONFERENCE. Rosenheim, Germany. Details from Georgina Green, BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA.

19th-21st August BRITISH BIRDWATCHING FAIR. Egleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water, Leicestershire. Enquiries to Tim Appleton. Fishponds Cottage, Stamford Road, Oakham, Leicestershire LE15 8AB.

20th-25th August XXI INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS. Vienna. Details from IOC Intereconvention, Friedrichstrasse 7, A-1043 Vienna, Austria.

28th August OBC MEETING. Blakeney Village Hall, Norfolk. Details from OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

20th September Closing date for entries for 'Young Ornithologists of the Year'.

1st October RSPB AGM. Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Westminster, London. Details from Yvonne Brown, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

22nd-23rd October WADER STUDY GROUP ANNUAL MEETING. Bosum, Germany. Details from Wader Study Group, PO Box 247, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5SN.

27th October BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION/CENTRAL SCIENCE LABORATORY. 'Bird searing.' Central Science Laboratory,

Slough. Details from Dr Chris Feare, CSL, MAFF, Tangley Place, Worplesdon, Guildford, Surrey GU3 3LQ.

4th-6th November SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Marine Hotel, North Berwick. Details from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

18th-20th November BTO/SCOTTISH RINGERS' CONFERENCE. Fife Arms Hotel, Braemar. Details from Steve Moyes, 4 Greystane Terrace, Invergowrie, Dundee DD2 5RH.

2nd-4th December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. Details from BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

10th December OBC TENTH ANNIVERSARY AGM. Zoological Society meeting rooms, Regent's Park, London. Details from OBC.

6th-8th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Swanwick.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

28th-29th January YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB GARDEN BIRDWATCH SURVEY.

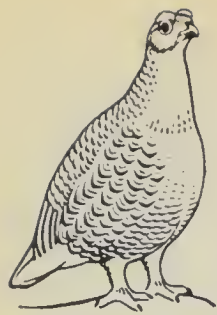
15th March Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'.

24th-26th March SEABIRD GROUP CONFERENCE. Glasgow.

21st-23rd April RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND.

20th-21st May BIRDATHON '94. YOC NATIONAL SPONSORED BIRDWATCH.

Mrs S. D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ



Last cranes at Bharatpur?

WE WERE DISTURBED to learn that no Siberian Cranes *Grus leucogeranus* appeared at Bharatpur (Uttar Pradesh) in winter 1993/94. The famous Indian wildlife sanctuary has, it seems, lost one of its most famous birds, after a steady period of decline dating back beyond the 1960s. There seems little doubt that hunting pressures on the birds' migration route southward from central Siberia have been a major cause of their final disappearance. Wintering numbers have remained more or less stable in Iran—but only at ten or 11 individuals, which does not give much cause for optimism.

There are about 3,000 wintering at Lake Poyang in China, but these birds (whose discovery was one of the ornithological highlights of the 1980s) are thought to be threatened by the building of the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtse River system, which may well starve Poyang of water.

The omens do not look good for the survival of the Siberian Crane. (BBC *Wildlife* April 1994)

Award for WRPB

We are very pleased to note that Dr W. R. P. Bourne has been honoured by the Zoological Society of London with the Stamford Raffles Award for 1993, in recognition of his contributions to the study of seabirds at sea.

The award was founded in 1961, and is made for distinguished contributions to zoology by an amateur zoologist (or, exceptionally, a professional zoologist working outside the scope of his professional activities and principal specialisation). This year the Award will be a bronze sculpture, 'Black rhinoceros', by Anita Mandl, to be presented

at the Society's AGM in September.

Dr Bill Bourne's knowledge of the ornithological literature and his contributions to seabird studies are renowned and amply justify this Award. His opinions are sometimes contentious and are always expressed bluntly, but we feel sure that this honour will be applauded by everyone, even those with whom he has crossed swords (verbally or in correspondence—it has not yet, so far as we know, literally become a meeting at dawn). Congratulations, Bill!

A personal word It seems a very long time since Peter Conder asked if I would lend a hand with 'N & C'. Working on these columns with Peter, Bob Spencer, Robin Prytherch and, most recently, Bob Scott has been fun and I have greatly enjoyed the contact I have had with so many correspondents in the UK and overseas. I thank them all for their support and forbearance. I propose to remain an occasional contributor; meanwhile, I step down knowing that I leave the feature in good hands. The happiest person in all this will undoubtedly be my postman . . . (Mike Everett)

It was a very long time ago. Mike stepped in to cover a four-month gap when Peter Conder was in Pakistan during February-May 1977, joined Peter as co-compiler on his return and has been going strong ever since—a continuous stretch of almost 17½ years. We are delighted that Mike's connections will not be wholly severed, since he has agreed to step in in any emergency and will also be providing a regular supply of his inimitable cartoons. Thanks, Mike!

Joining Bob Scott as co-compiler will be Wendy Dickson, but more of that next month. Eds

Some are new . . .

New to Britain and the world, and only recently described, is a small cranefly *Gonomyia hippocampi* found near Basingstoke, Hampshire, the type locality, in 1973. Since then the species has also been recorded from localities in Romania and Switzerland. Equally new to science is a money spider *Centromerus minutissimus* found in a pitfall trap near Boxworth, Cambridge.

Meanwhile, five new species of lichen and a snail *Papillifera papillaris* have been added to the British list. The snail was found on a wall in the grounds of Brownsea Castle, Dorset. A Mediterranean species, it is thought that it may have been imported in Victorian times and has only just come to light.

some are rediscovered . . .

On the island of Cebu, Philippines, the endemic Cebu Flowerpecker *Dicaeum quadricolor* was considered to be extinct in 1906. After some possible sightings in 1992, a party of research workers with the Philippine Wetland and Wildlife Conservation Foundation, working within the Central Cebu National Park, located four individuals on 13th March 1993, including a singing male which was successfully recorded.

Meanwhile, in November 1992, a female Borneo Bay Cat *Catopuma badia* was captured by native trappers on the Sarawak-Kalimantan border. There had been no confirmed sightings since 1928.

. . . and some are lost

There is some evidence that there may have been as many as 300 Colombian Grebes *Podiceps andinus* on Lake Tota, Colombia, in 1968. Since then only small numbers have been reported in this area of the Eastern Andes, sightings of one or two on 13th and 15th February 1977 apparently being the last to be reported. A very detailed search for the species in 1981 had no success, and the species is now considered extinct. The reasons are thought to be a combination of drainage, eutrophication and siltation.

'Grandma' still going strong

A small and growing colony of Royal Albatrosses *Diomedea epomophora* at Taiaroa Head, New Zealand, has been monitored continuously since 1937. With an annual adult survival rate of 94.6% and a first-breeding age of 8-10 years, it is clearly a long-lived species. One individual, named 'Grandma' by the research workers, appeared in the colony in 1993 at an age exceeding 61 years! Diomedidae are known to be long-lived birds, but it is a sobering thought that many travelling the oceans are older than most of those who watch them, and will probably still be circumnavigating the southern seas when many of today's birders have hung up their binoculars.

Better birding at Land's End

Planning permission has been granted for new viewing facilities at Land's End, which should have been in operation from Easter onwards. The new all-weather observation area on the cliffs overlooks the seabird colonies and is equipped with telescopes and information displays. In addition to providing access for the disabled, the new building will also act as a classroom for visiting school-children. Throughout the summer, the Land's End and John O'Groats Company Ltd will fund the RSPB to provide an information warden on site who will be available to lead guided walks.

Egg thieves heavily fined

Two men, from Nuneaton and Coventry, were charged at Holyhead Magistrates' Court on Anglesey on 21st March with attempting to take eggs of Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii*, intentionally disturbing the terns and possessing equipment capable of being used to commit offences. They were each fined £400 for disturbing the birds at the North Wales Wildlife Trust's Cemlyn Bay reserve in 1993, with a further £200 costs each.

Ospreys will be rare

It has been drawn to our attention that *The Times* Golf Correspondent, in a piece on a possible name for a score of four under par, stated '... according to the Royal Zoological Society, the koribustard is the largest bird of prey . . .'. Amongst a range of suggested names for this virtually unachievable score were Great Auk *Pinguinus impennis*, Magpie

Pica pica and Condor *Vultur gryphus*. What seems to have been overlooked is that in 1989, the centenary year of the RSPB, there was a competition that gave four under par the name Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*.

Unless golfers significantly improve their game, however, we cannot see this name catching on.

'Earthwatch' Opportunities

Fancy your chances at mist-netting and studying breeding birds at Mother Goose Lake, Alaska, or at Kellerberrin, Western Australia? Perhaps collecting moth larvae in Ecuador's rainforests or studying Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* on the Isle of Mull are more in your line? These are just four of the 152 projects listed in 'Earthwatch 1994'. Interested? Contact Earthwatch Europe, Belsyre Court, 57 Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 6HU.

Wetlands in Canterbury

On 12th March 1994, a Joint Kent Ornithological Society/BTO conference at Canterbury, Kent, had as its theme 'Wetlands'. Those who assembled, rejecting a weekend visit to Greater Manchester to see the Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*, enjoyed a wide range of presentations. Subjects ranged from the North Kent Marshes and Bharatpur to waterfowl-counting and reserve management. The slide presentations once again were of superb quality, and particular mention must be made of those shown by David Tipling (China) and Ray Tipper (Hong Kong). Quizzes and competitions included the *BB* photographic quiz, correct answers coming from Dave Walker, Murray Orchard and Jonathan Martin; Dave won the bottle of champagne on the draw.

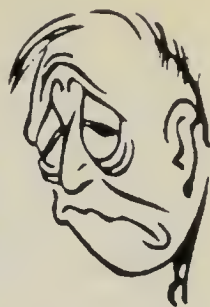
Dark-phase Long-tailed Skuas

Anxious to bring to a conclusion a long-outstanding report from Sussex, Chris Jamman, Assistant Recorder for the Sussex Ornithological Society (4 Brookside, Runcton, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 6PX), would like to hear from any observer with personal experience (or photographic evidence) of dark-phase Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* anywhere in the world.

Guy Mountfort

We are delighted to announce that Guy Mountfort has been elected as an Honorary Subscriber to *British Birds* in recognition of his great contribution to British ornithology and the world conservation movement. His name will forever be associated with the enormously influential 'Peterson, Mountfort & Hollom' *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*, which has appeared in 11 different languages and sold over two million copies since it was first published by Collins Natural History 40 years ago.

Escape Twitching



Why agonise over whether the Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* was a vagrant from the Orient or had recently escaped from an aviary? Who cares!

A new Dutch organisation named 'Escape Twitching' (note the double meaning) provides up-to-date news on all birds in the Netherlands, regardless of their origins. Does it matter that that Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki* may have flown 40 km or 400 km from a Continental dealer rather than 4,000 km from the Far East? It was still a Mugimaki Flycatcher and was just as difficult to find and to identify. The members of 'Escape Twitching' would happily add such a bird to their list. As they say in their literature: 'We put any bird on any list anyway.'

Escape info-line is +31-20-6647549; escape hotline is +31-1718-26271; or write to Arnold Meijer, Hoorneslaan 612, 2221 GL Katwijk aan Zee, Netherlands. (Information supplied by Anoud B. van den Berg)

More Special Protection Areas

Although we may at times have been critical of SPAs and the protection they offer, it is good to report that the Department of the Environment is pressing ahead with designations. Only if the designations are in place can action be taken under the European Community's Bird Directive. The new sites announced on 14th February 1994 are Benfleet and Southend Marshes, Essex; and Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons, Surrey. In addition, the first two sites are listed as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

In his letter of acceptance, Guy Mountfort wrote: 'I accept with great pleasure your offer to make me an Honorary Subscriber to *BB*. Having been a subscriber for sixty three years, I have watched with admiration its steadily improving standard of excellence, and I congratulate the present Editorial Board.'

The other Honorary Subscribers are currently I. J. Ferguson-Lees, P. A. D. Hollom, E. M. Nicholson, Major R. F. Rutledge, P. O. Swanberg, Prof. Dr Karel J. Voous and D. I. M. Wallace.

Welsh Ornithological Society Conference at Aberystwyth

Some hundred or so members of the Welsh Ornithological Society arrived early at Aberystwyth on 25th March for the annual conference. Following a welcome by WOS Chairman Graham Williams and the Society's AGM, which was completed in less than 15 minutes, Mike Shrubbs gave a round-up of birding activity, briefly describing the wealth of work currently being carried out in Wales. This includes over 100 ringing projects, monitoring programmes for Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, upland surveys, some in connection with wind-farm developments, seabird studies, counts of wintering sea-ducks and research on Red-billed Cough *Pyrhacorax pyrrhacorax*. Mike then announced the publication of the long-awaited 'Poyser' book *Birds in Wales* by Roger Lovegrove, Graham Williams & Iolo Williams, the first-ever book on the birds of Wales. The three authors were all present to sign copies.

The rest of the morning was devoted to talks by Peter Howlett of the National Museum of Wales on the how and why of ringing and by Steve Carter of the BTO on the Trust's various surveys, notably the new Breeding Bird Survey, for which a very large

proportion of the audience had already volunteered. This session prompted lots of questions, and showed the need for a duck decoy to ring wildfowl in the Principality and the reasons for Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* forsaking their traditional heronries.

At lunch there was a mingling of members from the south and north of Wales, a rare enough event in itself. Then Harold Grenfell chaired two talks with a maritime theme: Graham Rees spoke on the highlights of an autumnal dawn sea-watching session at Strumble Head in Pembrokeshire, following south to southwest gales (hot soup is recommended for such occasions!), and Peter Hope Jones gave a fascinating account of his analysis of nocturnal attractions of migrants at Bardsey lighthouse, which showed marked peaks at and around the new-moon periods; rather surprisingly, the passage of day-time migrants showed similar patterns. Lastly, Ian Wallace rounded off the conference by demonstrating the value of systematic recording of one's local patch with reference to his long-established transects in his home area of Staffordshire. (Contributed by Steph Tyler and Graham Williams)

Wetland initiative in North Wales

The tripartite initiative between the RSPB, the Countryside Council for Wales and the National Rivers Authority on Anglesey is proving very successful. Already, an agreed strategy has been drawn up for all wetlands on the island. This identifies actions needed to enhance or restore the wetlands' wildlife and the appropriate body to do this. The NRA is to be congratulated on progressing

active wetland management at several sites through Bryan Jones, their region's conservation officer. It is good to see the NRA setting targets to restore wet pasture and reedbeds elsewhere in North Wales. In both their Dee and Clwyd draft Catchment Management Plans, targets have been set to restore 25 ha of reedbed and a similar area of wet pasture. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

Choughs and Corn Crakes in Wales

On the Llyn peninsula in North Wales, the RSPB is working with the National Trust so that management of coastal heaths on Trust property will benefit feeding Red-billed Choughs *Pyrhacorax pyrrhacorax*. In the same area, the two bodies are trying to encourage Corn Crakes *Crex crex* by retaining late-cut silage fields and expanding the iris beds on Trust farmland.

On 29th January 1994, in appalling weather, 120 volunteers searched the Gwynedd coastline and the Snowdonia

mountains for choughs. Organised by the Wales Raptor Group, their intention was to establish the size and distribution of the wintering population. This was a truly joint effort, with volunteers from the RSPB, the BTO, the Cambrian Ornithological Society, the Countryside Council for Wales, the North Wales Wildlife Trust and the National Trust. In all, they counted 172 choughs, including 80 on Llyn and 35 on Anglesey. Very few were located at inland sites. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

Dyfed Wildlife Trust's New Visitor Centre

Dyfed Wildlife Trust's 200-acre (80-ha) reserve at the Teifi Marshes near Cardigan opened to the public on 28th March. The reserve, now renamed by the Trust as the Welsh Wildlife Centre, embraces the second-largest reedbed in Wales, which is a haunt of Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* and the occasional wintering Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, with a diversity of other bird-rich habitats. The area's history includes slate quarrying, pioneering railways, shipping and agriculture, but new habitats have now developed or been created from the industrial spoil. The Trust is reviving old traditions by, for example, making chairs from oak harvested from one of its own reserves.

Just 1½ km down a track from Cilgerran, a unique three-storey, energy-efficient building was commissioned by the Trust to be the flagship of their operations, not only within the surrounding area, but also for other environmental works carried out by the Trust. The Wheeler Group Consultancy designed and constructed the futuristic visitor centre,

which was built mainly from sustainable natural resources. A large glass wall to the front and sides allows uninterrupted views of the valley and reedbed. Head of the Centre, Robin Howard, kept a watchful eye over the construction to minimise damage to any adjacent habitat. The building represents part of an investment of around £1.5 million by Dyfed Wildlife Trust in the Centre, which has attracted support from Environmental Wales, the Prince of Wales' Committee, and the Wales Tourist Board, Preseli Pembro District Council, the Welsh Office and the EC.

British Birds was represented by Stephanie Tyler at the Press Day on 25th March for the official handover of the key. The Trust's ambitious project depends on a high turnover of visitors and school groups to the Centre, where there are a restaurant, craft shop, displays and other facilities. So, if you are in southwest Wales, go and have a look at this wetland reserve and see the amazing building for yourself.

Irish vote for Europe

Although *British Birds* adopted the name European Storm-petrel for *Hydrobates pelagicus* in 1993, there has been a strong lobby, from the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society and others, for the English name to be 'British Storm-petrel'.

More nest in Ireland, however, than in Britain, so we sampled Irish opinion on the matter by means of a letter in *IWC News* (78, spring 1994) and a postal referendum of IWC members.

An overwhelming 82% of the 104 postal votes cast were in favour of the name 'European Storm-petrel', just 10% for 'Irish Storm-petrel' and 6% for 'British Storm-petrel', with single votes for the even more parochial 'Kerry Storm-petrel' and for the opposite extreme, 'Atlantic Storm-petrel'.

This resounding vote in support of 'European' has been notified to the Working Group on English Names appointed by the International Ornithological Congress. (JTRS)

'Irish Birds'

With 124 pages, the latest issue of the IWC's annual journal is an essential buy for anyone interested in Irish birds.

Results of the 1992 census of Red-billed Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* (up by a third on the 1982 figures), a summary of occurrences of Little Gulls *Larus minutus* during 1970-91, and the fortieth 'Irish Bird Report' (for 1992) will be the highlights for most British readers, but there are seven other papers, the Irish ringing report for 1992 and six short notes, including accounts of Ireland's first Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Marsh Tit *Parus palustris* and Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*.

Irish Birds may be purchased for £10.00 (incl. p&p) from Irish Wildbird Conservancy, Rutledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

What do Goshawks eat?

An RSPB study of the well-established 250 breeding pairs of Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* in Wales has shown them to have a very varied diet. Amongst the prey recorded were Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*, Siskin *Carduelis spinus*, Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*, Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*, Magpie *Pica pica*, Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* and Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*. The occasional domesticated or feral cat also figured on the menu.

Unfortunately, the birds were also partial to Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*, particularly the penned birds. The RSPB is currently advising on possible ways of deterring goshawks from pheasant pens.

Norway's eagles double

The world population of White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* totals some 5,000 pairs. The greatest concentration is now in Norway, where numbers have doubled to 1,500 pairs since 1970. A range extension southwards has accompanied this increase and is perhaps responsible for the growing (but still small) numbers being reported in eastern Britain.

Taxes help eagles

A protection scheme for White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, has been particularly successful, with excellent breeding results. The protection programme has included renting or buying land suitable for nesting sites. Statutory agencies have now stepped in to assist, and the local annual tax payable by game-hunters in the region has been made available for further funding.

'Bird Watching' highlights

The June issue of the monthly magazine *Bird Watching* includes details of birding sites in Shetland, College Lake (Buckinghamshire) and Halmahera, where to watch waders this summer, where to find Common Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus*, and a survey of budget binoculars (under £150), plus a free 18-page booklet on wader identification. Ask for it at your local newsagent/bookshop.

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Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'



Monthly marathon



With that wing-stretching wader (plate 43 in the March issue), the sixth 'Monthly marathon' has been won. It was identified as Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* (48%), Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes* (36%) and seven other wader species. It was a Wood Sandpiper (SCORE 52), photographed in Germany in August 1988 by Axel Halley.

The leading contender—Paul Archer of 5 Cremore Drive, Glasnevin, Dublin 11, Ireland—correctly named it as a Wood Sandpiper, so, adding the score of 52 to his previous total of 473, he has achieved 525, exceeding the target of 500 and therefore winning his choice of a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, Asia or North America. Well done, Paul!

Now, therefore, we start a new 'Monthly marathon', reverting to the old ten-in-a-row rules (*Brit. Birds* 86: 25-26). In the seventh competition, April's flying bird (plate 60) becomes the first stage, May's swimming bird (plate 72) the second and this month's perching bird (plate 80, on page 306) the third. The closing date for all three stages is now amended to become 15th July 1994. **Look back at your April and May issues and start on the seventh 'Marathon' trail now!**

80. Seventh 'Monthly marathon', third stage: photo no. 96. Identify the species. Read the rules on pages 25-26 of the January 1993 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th July 1994.

Answers to first, second and third stages (plates 60, 72 and 80) can all be sent in now on the same postcard



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 18th April to 15th May 1994

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* Near Moira (Co. Down), 15th May (potentially first record since 1965 for Northern Ireland).

Black Kite *Mitrus migrans* Influx involving at least 16 from 22nd April to end of month, with another 12 in first half of May.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco tinnunculus* Milmore Quay (Co. Wexford), 2nd-5th May; Helvic Head (Co. Waterford), 5th May; Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 8th-15th May (perhaps all same individual); off Fastnet Rock (Co. Cork), 3rd May; Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 4th May; Dundalk (Co. Louth), 8th May; about four in England.

Eleonora's Falcon *F. eleonora* Copeland Bird Observatory (Co. Down), 1st May.

Little Crane *Porzana parva* One calling at night, Mersey Valley (Greater Manchester), 20th-24th April.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* Bredon's Hardwick (Worcestershire), 4th May.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus*

scolopaceus Pentney Gravel-pit (Norfolk), 28th April.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Earls Barton Gravel-pits (Northamptonshire), 19th-23rd April; Woking (Surrey), 4th-7th May.

Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes* Cley (Norfolk), 13th-15th May.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* St Agnes (Scilly), 3rd May.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* Dungarvan (Co. Waterford), 24th April-1st May; Bredon's Hardwick, 1st May; Abberton Reservoir (Essex), 3rd-12th May; Dungeness (Kent), 5th-6th May; Rye Harbour (East Sussex), 7th-8th May; two, Rockland Broad (Norfolk), 15th May.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* Hengistbury Head (Dorset), 20th April.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* East Harling (Norfolk), 10th May.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* Holkham Pines (Norfolk), 21st April; Holme (Norfolk), 15th May.



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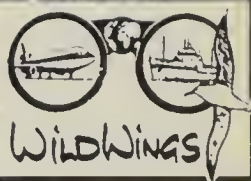
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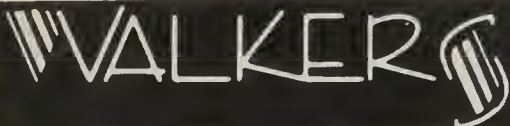
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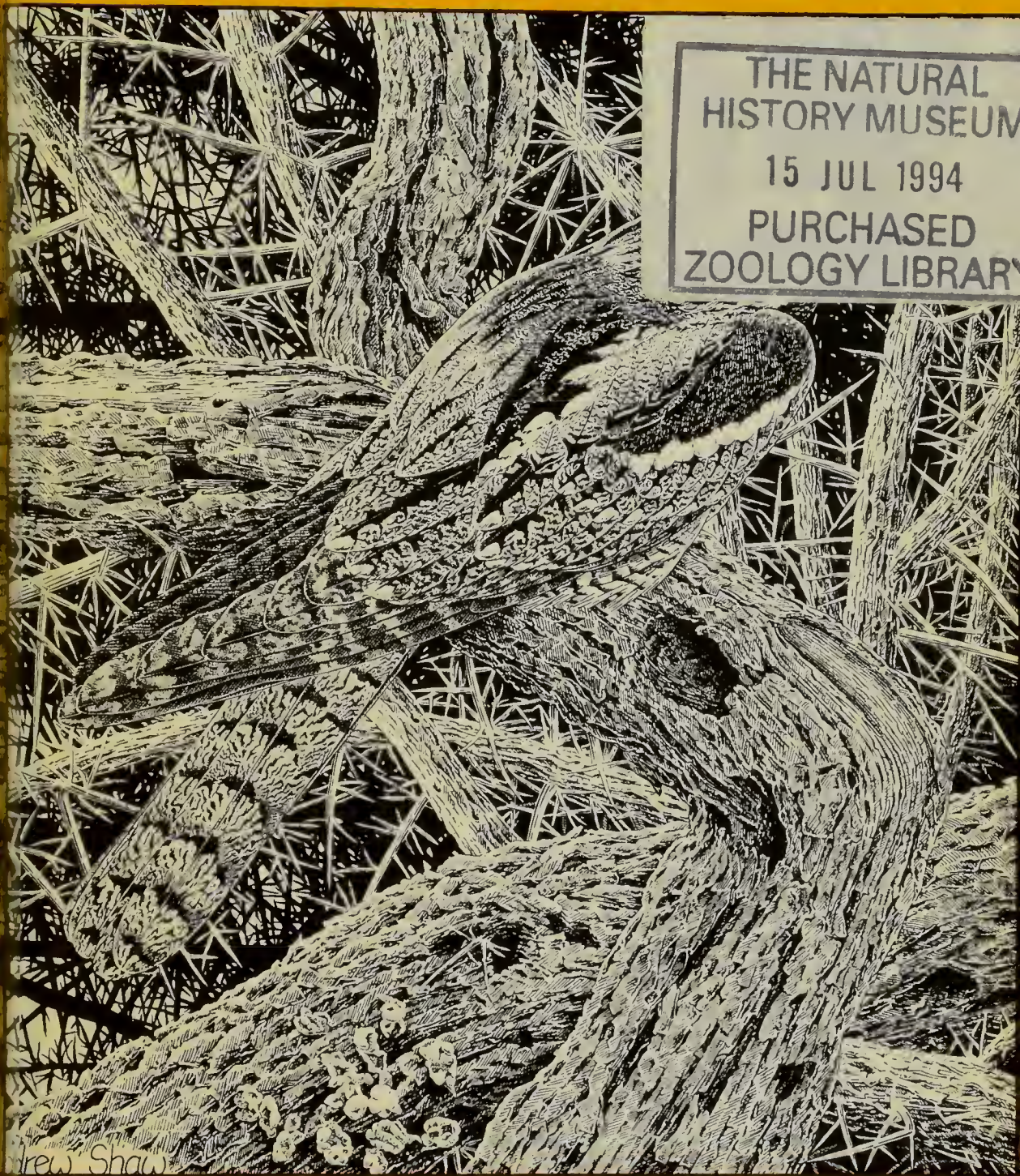
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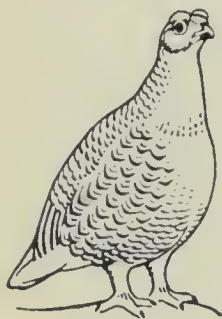
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SUNDAY 19TH
BEBERTON RESERVOIR, NR. COLCHESTER ESSEX
WEDNESDAY 18TH TO SUNDAY 26TH
THREE DAY EVENT, RSPB RESERVE, DUNGENESS EAST KENT
WEDNESDAY 25TH & SUNDAY 26TH
LAZARUS, EXE ESTUARY SOUTH DEVON
SUNDAY 26TH
BEECH DAMS NORTH YORKSHIRE

JULY

WEDNESDAY 2ND & SUNDAY 3RD
WWT CENTRE, ARUNDEL WEST SUSSEX
WEDNESDAY 2ND & SUNDAY 3RD
WWT CENTRE, LLANELLI, DYFED WALES
SUNDAY 3RD
WYNNINGTON FLASH, GREATER MANCHESTER
SUNDAY 3RD
WIMLEY MARSH RESERVE SUFFOLK
WEDNESDAY 9TH & SUNDAY 10TH
RSPB RESERVE, DUNGENESS EAST KENT
SUNDAY 10TH
BARONS GREEN, LEE VALLEY COUNTRY PARK ESSEX
WEDNESDAY 9TH TO SUNDAY 17TH
THREE DAY EVENT, WWT SLIMBRIDGE GLOUCESTERSHIRE
WEDNESDAY 16TH & SUNDAY 17TH
WWT CENTRE, MARTIN MERE, ORMSKIRK LANCASHIRE
WEDNESDAY 16TH & SUNDAY 17TH
HUMBER BRIDGE COUNTRY PARK HUMBERSIDE
SUNDAY 17TH
BEBERTON RESERVOIR, NR. COLCHESTER ESSEX
WEDNESDAY 23RD & SUNDAY 24TH
LAZARUS, EXE ESTUARY SOUTH DEVON
WEDNESDAY 23RD & SUNDAY 24TH
RSPB RESERVE, BLACKTOFT SANDS SOUTH HUMBERSIDE
SUNDAY 24TH
EGLETON BIRD OBSERVATORY, PORTLAND BILL DORSET
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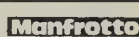
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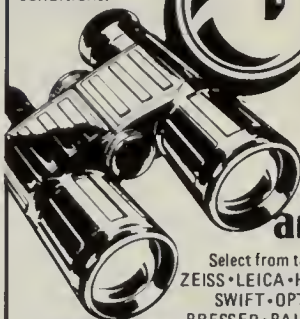
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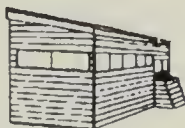
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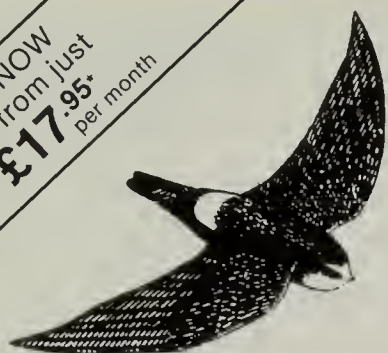
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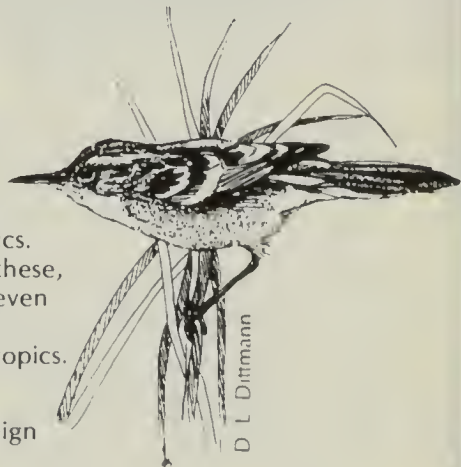
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Ancient Murrelet in Devon: new to the Western Palearctic

John Waldon

While Fair Isle or the Isles of Scilly in autumn are undeniably exciting, gross rarities sometimes appear at the least expected times and in the most unlikely places and are all the more memorable for that.

The RSPB South West office organised a trip to Lundy, Devon, to see Puffins *Fratercula arctica* on 27th May 1990. Most of the people who took the trip were delighted to be able to see Puffins and showed little or no interest in the finding of a small, 'auk-like' bird: but it was this that was to become the centre of attraction for the rest of that summer and the following one for hundreds of visiting birders.

At 14.15 BST, I was watching Common Guillemots *Uria aalge* and Razorbills *Alca torda* on the water in Jenny's Cove. Two Puffins were also seen. Keith Mortimer and Richard Campey were watching from farther south and I was surprised to see Keith heading quickly my way, as he ran up to report that they had been watching a small, auk-like bird in the bay. He said that it had a pale bill and was smaller than all the other auks.

By 14.25, I had walked to the spot where Richard and Keith were watching, and they had relocated the bird in question, flying far out to sea. I watched through Richard's telescope and saw the mystery bird flying with two Common Guillemots.

It was obviously smaller, not much more than half the size of the Common Guillemots; it looked long-winged, with plain upperwings except for darker primaries, and was basically dark above and pale below. It flew strongly, low over the water, usually ahead of the Common Guillemots, until all three landed together on the water. It swam low in the water, and looked small-headed, with the general appearance of a dark head and a dark horizontal line along the paler body. It soon dived and I lost track of it, feeling somewhat bemused.

At 14.45, I spotted a group of auks well out to sea, flying towards the land. One was noticeably smaller than the others, raising my spirits when I realised that the intriguing mystery individual had been relocated. All four – three Common Guillemots and what by now was evidently a murrelet – landed on the water about 200 m from the rocks. It was lost to view at 15.00.

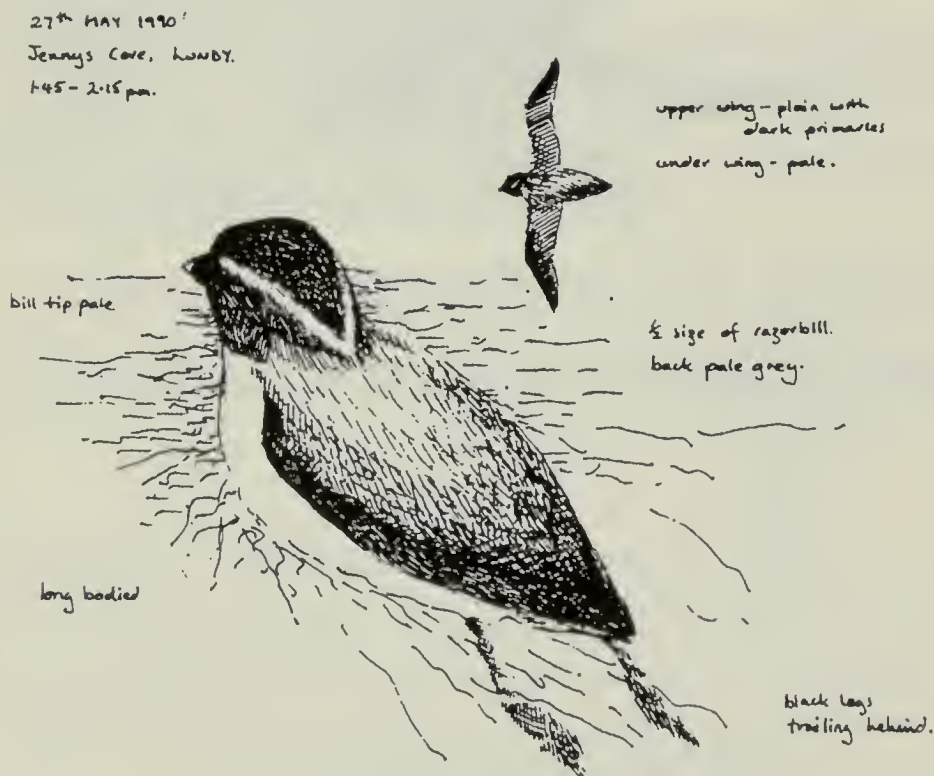


Fig. 1. Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus*, Lundy, Devon, May 1990 (John Waldon)

Richard and Keith had gone to find a reference book, so I watched the bird, using a 20× telescope, and made a drawing (fig. 1) and the following notes:

Back grey; very dark—black—edge to folded wing; pale below. Wings and tail similar length. Head smallish, black, with prominent white stripe [from above eye] meeting in V at nape. Bill small and pale (horn-coloured). Legs trailed behind and could be seen clearly. They were dark—almost black—and looked long and thin in the water.

The bird dived a few times and then flew out to sea accompanied by one Razorbill and a Guillemot. It was clearly only half the size of either. It was slender-looking, a 'long' bird, wings plain grey with markedly darker primaries. Its upper body was plain and it was paler below.

The lack of a good reference guide made positive identification difficult at the time: no-one had expected to find a murrelet on a summer visit to Lundy. When we borrowed and consulted Harrison's *Seabirds: an identification guide* (1983), the illustrations suggested the possibility of Japanese Murrelet *Synthliboramphus wumizusume* ('Crested Murrelet' in that book), because of the marked white V on the nape. It was only on the boat on the way home, when we were feeling somewhat mixed emotions of elation and confusion, that we looked at Tuck & Heinzel's *A Field Guide to the Seabirds of Britain and the World* (1978) and found, somewhat to our surprise, that the illustration of Ancient Murrelet *S. antiquus* clearly matched the bird we had seen. We were, then, confident that what we had seen was, incredibly, an Ancient Murrelet.

When we had returned to Exeter, Richard Campey sought the agreement of the Lundy Island Administration and then began the process of alerting the telephone bird-lines.

Most people's reaction was one of incredulity: even a suspicion that the whole thing was a hoax. One birder, who should perhaps remain anonymous, refused to believe the story at all until he came to my house, made me get my six-year-old daughter out of bed and quizzed her: once she had answered all his questions with the right replies and without evident prompting, he dashed off to book his boat trip for the next morning.

The Ancient Murrelet remained on the island until 26th June 1990, and returned in subsequent years from 4th April to at least 20th June 1991 and from 30th March to 29th April 1992. It was, for the most part, elusive and best seen very early in the mornings before it flew off to sea to feed. Although there were many who made more than one trip without success, most people, nevertheless, were eventually able to see the bird, which was surely one of the least expected additions to the West Palearctic list for many years.

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Rob Hume (Chairman, British Birds Rarities Committee) and Dr Alan Knox (Chairman, British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee) have commented as follows: 'As well as the Little Auk *Alle alle*, there are 12 species of murrelets *Brachyramphus*, *Endomychura* and *Synthliboramphus* and auklets *Ptychoramphus*, *Cyclorhynchus*, *Aethia* and *Cerorhinca* which breed in locations scattered around the Pacific from California to Japan. Of these, most can be ruled out of the identification process by uniformly dark plumage, sharply black-brown plumage with white underparts extending to the chin, or generally scaly brown coloration.

'Least Auklet *A. pusilla* has a white throat and a long white scapular line. Rhinoceros Auklet *C. monocerata* has a browner back and a narrow white supercilium, not extending to the nape, only in breeding plumage, when the bill is orange with a distinctive basal "horn". Parakeet Auklet *C. psittacula* has a very fine white streak behind the eye and a large, orange bill.

'As the observers quickly realised, Japanese Murrelet is the most likely species to confuse with Ancient Murrelet, but the black throat is less extensive, and the white patch on the side of the nape is broader towards the rear and forms a large triangle on the hindneck, invaded by a narrow, pointed black crest from the rear crown. The impression given by the Lundy bird, of a large and conspicuous white V from eyes to nape, was more than to be expected from the relatively narrow and streaked supercilia typically illustrated, but unlike Japanese in detail. Also, the Japanese Murrelet's legs are yellowish, not black as was noted on the Lundy bird when it swam.

'Thus, the identification was confidently made by the capable group of observers who first saw the bird, and later hundreds of people were able to repeat the process for themselves. The BBRC had a simple role, quickly processing and accepting the record without further debate (*Brit. Birds* 85: 532; 86: 496). Similarly, identification was accepted on a single circulation of the BOURC (*Ibis* 134: 213).

'The Ancient Murrelet breeds in Asia from Commander Island and Kamchatka south to Korea and Japan, and in North America from the Aleutian Islands eastwards to Alaska and south to British Columbia and Washington state. Some disperse south in winter as far as California.

'Ancient Murrelets are not known to be held in captivity.

'Although at first sight an unlikely candidate for natural vagrancy to the Western Palearctic, there were already European records of two other small Pacific alcids: a Crested Auklet *A. cristatella* collected at sea north of Iceland in August 1912 and a Parakeet Auklet collected on Lake Vättern in Sweden in December 1860 (*BWP* 4: 229-231).

'More than any of the other murrelets and auklets, there are numerous inland reports of Ancient Murrelets across southern Canada as far as Quebec and across mainly the northern United States to Ohio. The species has even been recorded in Louisiana, although not previously as far as the Atlantic. Marbled Murrelet *Brachyramphus marmoratus*, on the other hand, though rarer inland in North America, has been found on the Atlantic coasts of Newfoundland, Massachusetts and Florida (DeSante & Pyle, 1986, *Distributional Checklist of North American Birds*). Occurrence of Ancient Murrelets inland is most common in October and November and has been associated with storms offshore and poor visibility along the Pacific coast at the time. Fewer inland records have been reported in the spring, although some of the farthest east have been in March, April and May (*Wilson Bull.* 77: 235-242; *Condor* 68: 510-511). The species is apparently able to survive on fresh water for considerable periods.

'There were larger-than-usual numbers of Ancient Murrelets along the coast from British Columbia to northern California in December 1989 and January 1990. There were also four inland records that winter: in Washington state on 2nd November 1989, on the Columbia River between Washington and Oregon on 23rd November to 3rd December 1989, in Michigan on 25th-26th November 1989, and in Idaho on 29th January 1990 (*Amer. Birds* 44: 94, 152, 297, 319).

'Unlike Crested and Parakeet Auklets, which have already occurred in the Western Palearctic, the Ancient Murrelet does not occur in the Beaufort Sea or even in the northern Bering Sea. It is therefore not a likely candidate for vagrancy via a northern route.

'A possible scenario is that the Lundy bird crossed North America after a coastal storm sometime between autumn 1989 and spring 1990. Finding itself on the "wrong" side of an ocean, the bird subsequently migrated east and north: Lundy is at the same latitude as British Columbian nesting areas. The Ancient Murrelet then may have joined the Lundy breeding auks at sea and followed them inshore.

'Taking all this into consideration, the BOURC voted unanimously to place Ancient Murrelet in category A of the British and Irish List (*Ibis* 134: 213).' Eds



European news

This regular six-monthly feature summarises information for the whole of Europe (and some adjacent parts of the Western Palearctic) and has officially been adopted by the Association of European Rarities Committees for publication of compilations of major rarity records from each country.

This report includes records from 36 countries.

Details of all recent records have been supplied by the official national correspondents (see list at end of this report), and relevant published records have also been extracted for earlier years from the major national journals.

These summaries aim to include *all* records of: (1) significant breeding-range expansions or contractions; (2) major irruptions of erupting species; (3) Asiatic vagrants; (4) Nearctic species (excluding ducks, waders and gulls in Great Britain and Ireland, where they are regular); (5) other extralimital vagrants; and (6) major national rarities, even if common elsewhere in Europe.

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to single individuals

Records still awaiting formal ratification by the relevant national rarities committee are indicated by an asterisk (*)

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* MOROCCO Third and fourth records: Merja Zerga from late December 1990 to early January 1991 (*Porphyrio* 4: 43) and immature off Tangier on 7th September 1993.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* CANARY ISLANDS First record: adult on 13th-20th January 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 179).

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* FRANCE Second and third records: Nord on 4th September 1991 and Ille-et-Vilaine on 20th April 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 233). NORWAY Vagrant: adult on 24th February 1989 (fifth record, total becomes seven, cf. *Brit. Birds* 85: 443; *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 208).

Albatross *Diomedea* FRANCE Second to fourth records: Manche on 29th June 1991 (*Alauda* 61: 233), off Les Sables d'Olonne, Vendée, on 13th September 1993* and off Ouessant, Finistère, on 13th October 1993* (probably all Black-browed Albatrosses *D. melanophris*). NORWAY Second record: adult on 2nd November 1990 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 208).

Mediterranean Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* POLAND First record: Rewa, Gdansk Bay, on 20th August 1993.

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* GREAT BRITAIN First to third records: female at Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear, on (1) 23rd July 1989, (2) 26th July 1989 and (3) 6th/7th July 1990, 30th/31st July 1991, 29th/30th July 1992 (*Ibis* 136: 253-256) and 21st, 28th and 29th July 1993.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* FRANCE Increase: 10,400 pairs on Sept-Iles, Brittany, in 1993. LITHUANIA First record: adult at Ventės Ragas on 21st June 1993.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* BULGARIA Continued increase: about 1,300 breeding pairs and about 7,000 wintering individuals in 1993. ESTONIA Continued increase: about 800 pairs in 1993 at Matsalu Nature Reserve (colony founded in 1984, *Brit. Birds* 78: 338), and new colonies on Väike-Allirahu islet (17 nests in 1992), on Kirju islet (about 25 pairs in 1993), both at southern coast of Saaremaa Island, and on Sorgu islet, Livonian (Riga) Bay, Pärnu District (about 30 pairs in 1993). SWEDEN Still increasing rapidly: at least 11,000 pairs in 43 colonies in 1993 (cf. 6,750 pairs in 20 colonies in 1991, *Brit. Birds* 87: 2).

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* SPAIN Vagrants: at least four individuals (*Ardeola* 40: 180).

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* SPAIN First record (escape/vagrant): adult during August 1990, and possibly same individual from 24th April to at least 30th August 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 181). SWITZERLAND First record (probable escape): 23rd/24th September 1992 (*Nos Oiseaux* 42: 220; *Om. Beob.* 90: 262).

Frigatebird *Fregata* BELGIUM Third record: Ostend on 5th December 1988 (*Oriolus* 59: 94).

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* GREAT BRITAIN Census total: decline to about 16 'pairs' (Gibbons *et al.* 1993, 1988-91 Atlas).

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* LUXEMBURG First breeding record since 1950s: pair raised at least three young at Remerschen Gravel-pits in 1988; male at same site on 30th May 1993.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* ITALY Census total: 14,000-21,000 pairs in 1986-90 (increase, 14,000-17,500 in 1983-86) (*Suppl. Ric. Biol. Selvaggina* 20: 1-344).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* ALGERIA First breeding record: up to 2,000 wintering in 1992/93 and breeding proved in June 1993, with three nests and five young within colony of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* (*Alauda* 61: 215-216). BELGIUM Influx: at least six observations concerning eight to 11 individuals in spring 1992 (*Mergus* 7: 70-76). FRANCE Breeding records outside Camargue: probably 100 pairs in 1992 and 1993 (as far north as baie de Somme in 1993). SPAIN Range expansion: new colony of five pairs established in Navarra province during spring 1992. SWITZERLAND Unprecedented influx: ten records of probably wild individuals during the year, including four during 25th-28th April 1992 (three singles and one party of seven) (*Nos Oiseaux* 42: 212; *Om. Beob.* 90: 254-255). (Cf. influx into France and Great Britain in spring 1992, *Brit. Birds* 86: 37; 87: 3.)

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* FAROE ISLANDS Second record: Nólsoy on 2nd December 1993* (dead on 3rd). FRANCE Range expansion: nine pairs in Saint-Marcouf Reserve, Manche, Normandy, in 1993. Increase: along northern coasts (including in winter), and record number of breeding pairs in Charente-Maritime in 1993. GREAT BRITAIN Unprecedented influx: over 400 in 1993, mostly during autumn. ITALY Census total: 6,000-15,000 pairs in 1986-90 (increase, 6,000-11,000 pairs in 1983-86) (*Suppl. Ric. Biol. Selvaggina* 20: 1-344).

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* ITALY First breeding record: pair with three young in Comacchio valley, Ferrara, on 12th June 1993 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 63: 107).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* ALGERIA First breeding record: one nest in 1993 (*Alauda* 61: 216). BELARUS Wintering population increase: 110 censused in Grodno and Brest regions in 1992/93. ITALY Census total: 1,000-3,000 pairs in 1986-90 (increase, 1,000-1,500 pairs in 1983-86) (*Suppl. Ric. Biol. Selvaggina* 20: 1-344).

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* ISRAEL Vagrant: Ma'yan Zeri fish-ponds on 5th April 1993 (less than ten previous records).

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* BULGARIA Census total: 300-350 pairs in 1993 (rapid increase from 100-150 pairs in early 1980s). LUXEMBURG First breeding record: pair reared four young in 1993.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* FRANCE Census: 25 breeding pairs in Charente-Maritime département and nine pairs in Lorraine in 1993; 150 in three flocks in Dombes, Ain, on 31st August 1993. LUXEMBURG First attempted breeding: pair (both unringed) built nest, but male killed by electrocution on 16th April 1993.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* PORTUGAL Largest-ever winter count: seven in January 1993.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* ITALY Rapid increase: 20-30 pairs in 1990-1993 (none in 1983-86); first breeding in Piedmont: four nests, eight chicks reared, in 1990 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 63: 95-98).

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* FRANCE Escapes/vagrants: 6th-28th August 1991, 2nd October 1991 and 14th November to 1st December 1992 (first was in September 1987: *Alauda* 61: 253; *Ornithos* 1: 19).

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: Fuerteventura from December 1992 to May 1993. ITALY Establishment of colony: 1,400 pairs in Molentargius pond, Sardinia, with 950 young hatched during May to August 1993 (*Proc. VIII Italian Ornithological Conference* in press). SPAIN New breeding colony: after several years of attempts, successful colony with up to 503 nests and 313 fledged young at the Elbro Delta in 1993.

Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor* SPAIN Escapes/vagrants: two in Elbro Delta during April and June 1990, one remaining until 16th January 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 181).

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* GREAT BRITAIN Census total: sample survey in 1990 estimated about 25,800 in Britain, a 38% increase on previous survey, in 1983 (1988-91 *Atlas*). MALTA Influx: at least eight in December 1993 (last two influxes: flock of 25 in January 1993 and four records in December 1984; only seven documented records prior to 1984).

Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus* ESTONIA First record of race *columbianus*: Kolu, Matsalu Nature Reserve, Läänemaa District, on 10th October 1992.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* LITHUANIA Third breeding record: about 280 km from the Baltic coast in 1993 (first and second records were in 1965 and 1989). SPAIN Small influx: up to 22 on northwestern coasts (Asturias and Galicia) in November-December 1990, one colour-ringed in Iceland (*Ardeola* 40: 181-182).

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* DENMARK Highest-ever count: 9,000 passing Christianso, Bornholm, on 25th September 1993. MOROCCO Fourth and fifth records: adult at Merja Zerga on 15th January 1993, and one at Larache on 22nd January 1993.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* BULGARIA Second confirmed record for last ten years: two adults with about 25,000 White-fronted Geese *A. albifrons* near Shabla Lake on 11th February 1994 (*Neophron* 3: 20). ISRAEL Small influx: two at Eilat and two at Jezreel Valley in November 1993 to March 1994 (only three previous records).

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* BELARUS First winter record: single with White-fronted Geese *A. albifrons* in Brest in January-February 1993. CANARY ISLANDS Second record: Fuerteventura from November 1993 to February 1994. GREAT BRITAIN Increase and range expansion of feral population: breeding was recorded in more than three times as many 10-km grid-squares during 1988-91 as in 1968-72, and British population estimated to have increased to 22,000 individuals (1988-91 *Atlas*).

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* MALTA Presumed escape: coming inland in December 1993.

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii* GREAT BRITAIN Escapes: all British records regarded as referring to escapes from captivity (*Ibis* 136: 253-256). NETHERLANDS Returning vagrant: for seventh consecutive winter, from 26th December 1993.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: one ringed in Maryland, USA, seen in northeast Scotland in December 1992 (first transatlantic ringing recovery of this species).

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* ICELAND Fourth record of nominate race: 20th May 1991 (*Bliki* 13: 19-20). MOROCCO Date extension: ten of nominate race at Merja Zerga (*Brit. Birds* 85: 446) stayed to 4th February 1992 (*Porphyrio* 5: 76).

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* CYPRUS Second record: Larnaca Airport Pool North on 19th December 1993. DENMARK Largest-ever flock: three juveniles with two adults at Rømø-dæmningen, SW-Jutland, on 30th September to 2nd October 1993*. NORWAY Fifth record: Inderøy, Steinkjer and Vardal, Nord-Trøndelag, on 9th-17th May 1992*.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* FRANCE Escapes: increasing numbers, especially since the mid 1970s, mostly in the northeast, regarded as being of feral or escape origin, with only one record, in September 1668, being regarded as of a wild individual (*Alauda* 61: 223-227).

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* GREAT BRITAIN Increase and range expansion: feral population now estimated at around 7,000 individuals, with much wider breeding range than recorded in 1968-72 (1988-91 *Atlas*). IRELAND Feral population: four broods totalling 33 young in May 1990 and up to 25 individuals in winters 1991/92 and 1992/93 on Shimna River near Newcastle, Co. Down (*Irish Birds* 5: 76).

American Wigeon *Anas americana* CANARY ISLANDS Second record: male, two females and immature on Fuerteventura on 14th February 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 183; this entry replaces *Brit. Birds* 84: 228). FRANCE Vagrant: male on 8th-22nd March 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 234; *Ornithos* 1: 5).

Chiloe Wigeon *Anas sibilatrix* NORWAY Presumed escape: 20th July 1989 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 221).

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* BELGIUM Deletion: record in March-April 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 7) now rejected. SWITZERLAND First record (probably escape): males on 4th January 1992 and 17th March 1992 regarded as referring to a single individual (*Nos Oiseaux* 42: 220; *Orn. Beob.* 70: 263).

Common Teal *Anas crecca* CANARY ISLANDS Second record of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: male on Tenerife from 25th December 1991 to 8th March 1992 (*Ardeola* 40: 183). FRANCE

Vagrant of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: male in winter 1990, 1991 and 1992 (*Alauda* 59: 228; 61: 235; *Ornithos* 1: 5). GREAT BRITAIN Range contraction: considerable reduction in breeding range since 1968-72 (1988-91 *Atlas*). NORWAY Vagrants of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: male during 19th-28th April 1991 (sixth record, total becomes ten; *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 209), Inderoy, Nord-Trøndelag, on 29th April to 7th May 1992*, and Meloy, Nordland, on 23rd May 1993*.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* FRANCE Vagrants: male on 25th May 1991, immature male on 16th February 1992 and female/juvenile on 12th-13th September 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 235; *Ornithos* 1: 5). SPAIN Vagrant: 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 183).

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* GREAT BRITAIN Census total: wintering population currently about 10,000, peaking in October (*Bird Study* 40: 170-180).

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* BULGARIA Fourth record: Atanasovo Lake on 3rd December 1993 (*Neophron* 3: 19). MOROCCO Correction: record in marshes of Oued Moulouya estuary (*Brit. Birds* 87: 4) is of sixth confirmed breeding site (not sixth breeding record). SPAIN Population estimate: 70-100 breeding pairs in 1992 (*Quercus* 87: 12-17).

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* MOROCCO Confirmed breeding and range extension: male, two females and three young at Douyiet on 27th June 1993.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* FAROE ISLANDS First-ever flock: 12 on Toftirvatn, from about 23rd November to 7th December 1993* (the five previous records have all been of singles).

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* CANARY ISLANDS First to fourth records: male at Tenerife on 26th January to 30th March 1986, female at Fuerteventura on 12th-16th December 1991, first-winter male at Tenerife from 1st December 1990 to 3rd January 1991, and female at Tenerife on 1st April 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 183). DENMARK Fifth and sixth records: adult male at Mollekrog, Esrum So, Zealand, on 26th September to 8th October 1993*, and adult male at Gavio, Næstved, on 24th November 1993*. FRANCE Vagrants: three males, on 9th January to 8th March 1992, and probably the same from 2nd November 1992 to 24th March 1993, on 26th April 1992, and on 25th-29th November 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 235; *Ornithos* 1: 5). NORWAY

Vagrant: adult female during 30th November to 31st December 1991 (total becomes 22; *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 210).

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* BELARUS First winter record: male in Brest on 4th February 1993.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* LUXEMBURG First breeding record: pair raised six young at Remerschen Gravel-pits in 1988; at least three pairs have bred since 1989. SPAIN Second breeding record: female with four small young in Cospeito, Lugo, in July 1993.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* FRANCE First record: male on 20th-24th November 1993*. IRELAND Returning vagrant: male in Co. Armagh/Co. Down returned for his fourth and fifth winters in 1991/92 and 1992/93 (*Irish Birds* 5: 85). SPAIN First record: male in La Coruña province from 12th January to 23rd March 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 183).

Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* PORTUGAL Second record and first this century: first-winter male at Alvor, Algarve, from 26th November to 13th December 1993 (first record was one shot in October 1891).

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* ICELAND Correction: sixth record (*Brit. Birds* 87: 4) was 19th September to 29th December (not September) 1991. LATVIA Third to fifth records: two small flocks at Pape, Liepāja district, on 18th April 1993, and male on east coast of Riga Bay on 17th January 1994.

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* FRANCE Probable escape: male at L'Ailette, Aisne, on 4th December 1993*.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* FRANCE First record of race *americana*: male at Dunkerque on 15th April 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 235; *Ornithos* 1: 5).

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* DENMARK Tenth record: two at Norre Vorupor, N-Jutland, on 11th-12th October 1993*. FRANCE Vagrants: male on 9th March 1991 (*Alauda* 61: 235; *Ornithos* 1: 5), female at Quiberon, Morbihan, on 3rd November 1993*, male at La Trance-sur-Mer, Vendée, from 27th December 1993 to at least end of February 1994*, and first-winter male at Pénestin, Morbihan, from 31st December 1993 to at least 9th January 1994*.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* SPAIN First record: female at Traba lagoon, La Coruña province, from 25th December 1992 to 9th January 1993* (perhaps same as that seen in Portugal, in January-February 1993) (*Brit. Birds* 86: 280).

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* FRANCE First breeding record: two pairs successfully bred on Chausey Islands, Manche, Normandy, in spring 1993.

Goosander *Mergus merganser* GREAT BRITAIN Range expansion: very substantial southward spread into England and Wales since 1968-72 (1988-91 *Atlas*). SLOVENIA Increase: five females with young at Trbojsko jezero in 1993 (first breeding record was in 1991, *Brit. Birds* 85: 447).

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* GREAT BRITAIN Increase and range expansion: enormous expansion of both numbers and breeding range since 1968-72 (1988-91 *Atlas*); 570 pairs estimated in 1990. MOROCCO First record (*Brit. Birds* 86: 280; 87: 4), additional sightings: three males and one female on 11th April 1993, three males and two females on 9th December 1993, and three males and four females or immatures on 7th January 1994; second record: two pairs displaying at Douyiet on 17th June 1993, with male still present on 29th September 1993.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* BULGARIA Census total: 150 wintering on Mandra Lake on 2nd December 1993.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* IRELAND First record since 1972: Co. Kerry on 27th May 1992 (*Irish Birds* 5: 87).

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* BELGIUM First record: adult at Thuillies, Hainaut, on 27th-28th April 1992.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* LUXEMBURG Census totals: five to six pairs 1983, eight to nine pairs 1984, and 15 to 17 pairs 1992-93.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* CANARY ISLANDS First record since extinction in 1960s: adult on Fuerteventura in November 1993. DENMARK Highest-ever count: 172 at Stevns Klint, Zealand, on 29th September 1993, arriving from Falsterbo, Sweden. FINLAND Highest-ever total: nine in 1992. GREAT BRITAIN Progress of reintroduction: reintroduced pairs nested successfully in England and Scotland for the first time in 1992; in 1993, 12 young were reared in England and seven in Scotland. LUXEMBURG Census totals: ten to 12 pairs in 1975, and 21 to 26 pairs in 1992-93.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* BULGARIA Census total: five or six pairs in 1993. GREAT BRITAIN Progress of reintroduction: reintroduced pairs raised five young in Scotland in 1993. ICELAND Breeding status: population stable for last five years, with

about 80 adults; about 30 pairs nested in 1993, but only 14-15 pairs successful, rearing 15-16 young.

Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus* ESTONIA First record: fourth-year found dead at Pikasilla, Valgamaa district, on 12th September 1993 (probable escape; probably same individual as that recorded in Finland, Germany and Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 87: 4). FINLAND Vagrant/escape: Kuusamo on 12th June 1993.

Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* BULGARIA First confirmed breeding since 1950: successful nesting not far from feeding-place in BSPB programme (*Neophron* 3: 1).

Short-toed Eagle *Circus gallicus* BELGIUM Ninth record: Bernissart, Marais d'Harchies, Hainaut, on 23rd-24th May 1992. MALTA Vagrants: about 50 on 10th November 1993 (previously only up to 11 recorded in one year; only occasional in November). NETHERLANDS Seventh record: Terschelling, Friesland, on 2nd August 1993.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* FINLAND Highest-ever total: nine in 1992.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* NETHERLANDS Breeding increase: increase in breeding pairs in northeastern Groningen, between Delfzijl and Stadskanaal, from none in 1989, two in 1990, seven in 1991, and 21 in 1992 to 27 in 1993.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* BELGIUM Fourth record: adult at Retie on 2nd July 1992.

Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* MOROCCO Third record: Larache on 28th December 1993*.

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* FRANCE First record this century: immature in Camargue from 25th November 1993 to at least beginning of March 1994* (October 1989 report, *Brit. Birds* 83: 224, was rejected).

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* CANARY ISLANDS Census: ten to 13 pairs. SPAIN Census: ten to 14 pairs in the Balearic Islands and one in the Chafarinas Islands.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* SWITZERLAND Fourth record: male with Red-footed Falcons *F. vespertinus* on 29th May 1992, the first record since 1964 (*Nos Oiseaux* 42: 214; *Om. Beob* 90: 256).

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* FRANCE First confirmed breeding records: pair in Vendée département (Atlantic coast) and pair in Isère département (Alps); also attempted breeding in Crau, Bouches-du-Rhône, all in

spring 1993. IRELAND Large party: five (3 males, 2 females) at Ballyconnelly, Co. Galway, on 28th-29th April 1992 (only seven previous records: *Irish Birds* 5: 88). SPAIN Highest-ever numbers on Menorca, Balearic Islands, during spring 1992, with peak of 68 at Son Moscard on 13th May (cf. high numbers in northwestern Europe, *Brit. Birds* 87: 223-231).

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae* FRANCE High numbers: 13 records involving at least 31 individuals in 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 239); records outside southern France: two at Pénestin, Morbihan, Brittany, on 28th August 1993*.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* FINLAND/NORWAY Long-term decline: of 16 identified nesting sites in small area of Lapland, where 29 pairs known in 1854-64, evidence of only three pairs in 1991 (*Fauna Norvegica* 16: 75-82). ICELAND Records of white-morph *candicans*: 8th April 1991 and mid April 1991 (27 records since 1979) (*Bliki* 13: 24). NORWAY See Finland. PORTUGAL First recent record: Odemira on 15th and 22nd March 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 184).

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* ICELAND Fifth record: 24th October 1991 (*Bliki* 13: 24).

Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* GREAT BRITAIN Range contraction: extinction in southern England since 1968-72, and range contraction elsewhere (1988-91 *Atlas*).

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* GREAT BRITAIN Decrease and range contraction: considerable losses between 1968-72 and 1988-91 (1988-91 *Atlas*).

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* GREAT BRITAIN Range contraction: near-disappearance from large parts of western Britain since 1968-72 (1988-91 *Atlas*).

Corn Crane *Crex crex* CANARY ISLANDS First record for El Hierro island: found dead in September 1993. GREAT BRITAIN Decline: 2,640 pairs in 1968-72, 730-750 singing males in 1978-79 and 550-600 in 1988 (*Bird Study* 27: 203-218; *Brit. Birds* 83: 173-187). MOROCCO Only recent record: Oukaimeden on 17th August 1993.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyryla alleni* CANARY ISLANDS Second record: immature on 2nd December 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 185). MALTA First documented record: ringed in January 1991 (records of two specimens in local collections have never been documented).

Common Coot *Fulica atra* BELARUS Wintering population increase and highest-ever winter

counts: at least 1,500 at sewage and fish-breeding ponds and cooling reservoirs of power stations in winter 1992/93.

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* FRANCE Escape/vagrant: 9th-19th October 1991 (tenth record this century; *Alauda* 61: 254).

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* NETHERLANDS First record since 1988: Grijpskerke, Zeeland, on 29th November to 16th December 1993.

Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* CYPRUS Second recent record: Mandria, Paphos, on 11th October 1993 (previous record was in November 1979).

Great Bustard *Otis tarda* SLOVENIA First record for 50 years: single found wounded and starved (died later) at Draža vas, near Slovenski Konjice, on 7th December 1993.

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* GREECE Third record: adult at Viglafia Lagoon, Lakonia, on 23rd April 1990.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* NETHERLANDS Vagrants: two at Philipsdam, Zeeland, on 7th June 1992. SPAIN First record: Albufera Lagoon, Mallorca, on 25th April 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 185). Deletion: record in October 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 341) now rejected.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* GREAT BRITAIN Third record: localities in Norfolk from 14th May to 17th August and, perhaps same individual, East Sussex on 29th August 1993*.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* SWEDEN Second record: St Ören, Öland, on 5th-11th August 1993*.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* GREAT BRITAIN Census total: 840 pairs, estimated from surveys in 1987-88 (*Bird Study* 40: 161-169). LATVIA First record for 50 years: first-winter on east coast of Riga Bay on 1st-2nd September 1993.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* CANARY ISLANDS First record: Tenerife during September 1993*. FRANCE First record: 29th May 1991 (*Alauda* 61: 241; *Ornithos* 1: 9).

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: first-winter from 23rd November to 21st December 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 185). SPAIN Vagrant: single in 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 185).

American Golden Plover/Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica/P. fulva* DENMARK Correction: sixth record (*Brit. Birds* 87: 6) was

on 19th August (not April) 1991. FRANCE Vagrant: 31st August 1991 (*Alauda* 61: 241; *Ornithos* 1: 9).

Spur-winged Lapwing *Hoplopterus spinosus* HUNGARY First record: first-winter near Csaj-tó fishponds for two weeks around 17th October 1993*.

Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria* CANARY ISLANDS First record: El Hierro in February 1992*. FINLAND Fourth record: Kemiö on 9th June 1992. POLAND Sixth record: adult at Zagorow, near Konin, on 29th May 1992.

White-tailed Lapwing *Chettusia leucura* FINLAND Second record: Siikajoki on 15th May 1990.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* GREAT BRITAIN Range contraction: breeding ceased in parts of southwestern Britain between 1968-72 and 1988-91 (1988-91 *Atlas*). ICELAND Influx: at least 58 reported in February 1991 (*Bliki* 13: 24-25).

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* SPAIN First and second records: La Coruña province during 5th-10th October 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 185).

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* IRELAND 'A rather poor year' in 1992 (*Irish Birds* 5: 88-89).

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* AZORES Vagrants: two on 26th-27th August 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 185). DENMARK Ninth record: Aflandshage, Amager, Zealand, on 6th-9th June 1993*. SPAIN Vagrant: single in 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 185). SWEDEN Ninth and tenth records: Skanör, Skåne, on 3rd June 1993*, and on Furilden, Gotland, on 14th-21st August 1993*.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* POLAND Second record: juvenile at Mietkow Reservoir, Silesia, on 19th-26th October 1993 (first was in August 1978, *Brit. Birds* 73: 575).

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: juvenile on 30th September 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 185). CZECH REPUBLIC Fourth record: Služebný pond, near Trebon, southern Bohemia, on 28th August 1993 (seventh record for former Czechoslovakia). HUNGARY Fourth and fifth records: adult at Árkus on 17th July 1993*, and three near Naszály-Ferencmajor on 12th-14th September 1993*. NORWAY Vagrants: during 18th-26th July 1989 and 18th-23rd August 1989 (total becomes 46; *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 213); Lista, Farsund, Vest-Agder, on 23rd-28th October 1993*. SPAIN

Vagrants: 21st April 1991, 24th-25th August 1991, 20th-29th September 1991, and 25th-30th September 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 185).

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* IRELAND Low numbers: under 50 in 1992 (*Irish Birds* 5: 89).

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* CANARY ISLANDS First record: individual wintering from December 1991 to March 1992.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* FRANCE Vagrants: 17th September 1991, 2nd November 1991, 2nd-6th September 1992 (two on 4th-6th), two on 15th September 1992 and one on 27th-30th September 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 242; *Ornithos* 1: 10). HUNGARY First record: juvenile with 100 Dotterels *Charadrius morinellus* on Szelencés puszta, Hortobágy National Park, on 10th October 1993*, and, again with Dotterels, at Angyalhaza puszta on 14th-22nd October 1993*. SWEDEN Vagrant: Halmstad, Halland, on 5th October 1988 (total now 14).

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus* LITHUANIA First breeding record: pair in 1993.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* GREAT BRITAIN Range contraction: considerable since 1968-72, especially in the lowlands and upland margins (1988-91 *Atlas*).

Long-billed Dowitcher/Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus/L. griseus* FRANCE Vagrant: 18th-24th October 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 243; *Ornithos* 1: 11). POLAND Vagrant: Zarnowieckie Lake, near Baltic coast, on 6th August 1993.

Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* BULGARIA Atanasovo Lake, 18th October 1993, and on Black Sea coast, south of Burgas, on 16th-17th November 1993 (*Neophron* 3: 21). FRANCE Vagrant: Ouessant on 29th May 1991 (not 31st May, *Brit. Birds* 85: 9; *Alauda* 61: 243; *Ornithos* 1: 11). GREECE Axios Delta, on 4th January 1989 (*Biol. Conserv.* 53: 47-60). MOROCCO Date extensions: winter 1991/92, Merja Zerga (*Brit. Birds* 85: 451; 86: 283), last sighting 9th February 1992 (*Porphyrio* 5: 103); winter 1992/93, two at Merja Zerga (*Brit. Birds* 86: 283; 87: 7) last seen on 18th February 1993; winter 1993/94: Merja Zerga, single from 29th October 1993 and two from 10th November 1993 to at least 26th January 1994. (We are publishing all records received of this species.)

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* FRANCE Fifth record: Finistère on 6th-7th January 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 244; *Ornithos* 1: 11).

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* NORWAY Sixth record: Lista, Farsund, Vest-Agder, on 1st July 1993*. PORTUGAL Second and third records: Quinta de Marim, Ria Formosa, Algarve, from 11th November to 7th December 1993*, and Ria de Alvor, Portimão, Algarve, on 31st December 1993*. SPAIN First record for the Balearic Islands: adult on Albufera Lagoon, Mallorca, on 25th April 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 186). SWEDEN Sixth and seventh records: Visingsö, Småland, on 1st August 1993*, and at Södviken, Öland, on 7th August 1993*. Deletion: report on 22nd June 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 7) now rejected.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* BELGIUM Fifth to seventh records: adult at Kallo/Doel on 11th May 1992, single at Uitkerke on 13th November 1992, and single on 25th-26th April 1993 (first record in Wallonia) and probably the same individual 25 km away on 26th-29th April 1993 (*Aves* 30: 72-74). CANARY ISLANDS Third record: Tenerife in April 1993*. HUNGARY Vagrant: moulting adult at Hortobágy-Halastó on 17th September 1993*. SWITZERLAND Third record: 16th May 1992 and 17th May 1992, probably the same individual (*Nos Oiseaux* 42: 215; *Om. Beob.* 90: 257).

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* CANARY ISLANDS First record: 16th November 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 186). FRANCE Vagrants: two adults at Saint-Guénolé, Finistère, on 20th August 1993*, and adult and juvenile at étang du Pin, Loire-Atlantique, on 14th September 1993*.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* BELGIUM Vagrant: Zeebrugge on 18th-21st May 1992. FRANCE Vagrants: juvenile on 20th-23rd September 1985 and probable female on 9th May 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 244; *Ornithos* 1: 11).

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyæus* DENMARK Second record: juvenile at Blåvandshuk, W-Jutland, on 10th October 1993*.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* FINLAND Fifth record and second autumn record: adult in winter plumage in Åland on 30th September 1992.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* FRANCE Vagrants: first-winter on 28th September 1991 (*Alauda* 61: 244; *Ornithos* 1: 12), first-winter at Beauvoir-sur-Mer, Vendée, from 29th August to 3rd September 1993*, and juvenile moulting to first-winter at Le Portel, Pas-de-Calais, on 18th September 1993* (now annual). NETHERLANDS First record: adult at

Harderwijk, Gelderland, on 25th-28th September 1993*.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* FRANCE Vagrant: adult on 20th February 1989 (*Alauda* 61: 245; *Ornithos* 1: 12). MOROCCO First record: adult at Oued Sous estuary on 8th January 1994*.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* FRANCE Major influx on western Atlantic coast: during storm of 12th-14th September 1993, especially between south Brittany and Gironde Estuary: estimated at least 2,000, with 600 in Les Sables d'Olonne area, Vendée, and three inland records along Loire River (see *Ornithos* 1: 31-33). MOROCCO Vagrant: adult in winter plumage in Strait of Gibraltar on 22nd December 1992 (*Porphyrio* 5: 109).

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* PORTUGAL Second and third records: in Carcavelos-Caxias area, adult on 3rd February to 3rd March 1991 and first-winter on 12th February to 23rd March 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 187).

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* SPAIN New colony: established at Iglá Grosa, Murcia, with about 300 adults in April 1992 and 400-500 adults and 153 nests on 31st May 1993.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* BELGIUM Vagrant: adult in Wuustwezel on 18th-19th April 1992. FRANCE Vagrants: seven adults during winter 1993/94* (mostly returning birds). NORWAY Vagrants: adult on 6th January 1991 and second-winter during 7th January to 13th February 1991 (total becomes 12; *Får Fuglefauna* 16: 214); adult at Utsira, Rogaland, on 22nd-23rd May 1993 and on 7th-22nd July 1992. PORTUGAL Vagrants: eight in winter 1990/91 (*Ardeola* 40: 188). SPAIN Vagrants: 11 in winter 1990/91 (*Ardeola* 40: 187-188).

Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens* CANARY ISLANDS First record: El Hierro during February 1992* (potential first for Western Palearctic).

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* DENMARK Fourth record: Skagen, N-Jutland, on 20th October 1993*. ICELAND Vagrants: three in 1991 (previous total 20; *Bliki* 13: 28).

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* BULGARIA Third and fourth records: Alepu Lake, South Black Sea coast, in March 1992, and near Dooni Bogrov, Sofia region, on 1st November 1993 (*Neophron* 3: 20). FINLAND Largest-ever influx: over 200 migrating at beginning of November 1993.

Royal Tern *Sterna maxima* GIBRALTAR Eighth record: adult at Europa Point, on 2nd October 1993. PORTUGAL First record: 10th October 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 188). SPAIN Vagrant: adult on 14th April 1990 (*Ardeola* 40: 188).

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* GREECE Second record: adult at Aejion Lagoon, Achaia, on 4th July 1990.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* FRANCE Breeding: pair on Molène archipelago, Brittany, in 1993 (very rare and irregular breeding species).

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* IRELAND Vagrants: Co. Wexford on 4th-26th December 1992 and Co. Down from 8th November to 14th February 1993 (*Irish Birds* 5: 95).

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* NORWAY First and second breeding records: pair with two eggs in Østfold county on 20th June 1992, and pair with three eggs in Østfold county on 30th May 1993*.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* FINLAND Fifth and sixth records: in south Finland on 23rd May 1992 and 31st May 1992. NORWAY Fourth record: juvenile on 25th September 1991 (previous records were in June 1980, May 1985 and July 1987, *Brit. Birds* 85: 9; *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 214).

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* BELGIUM Exceptional influx: seven different individuals, including six together, during 18th-19th May 1992. LUXEMBURG First record: Remerschen Gravel-pits on 9th May 1993.

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle* SLOVENIA First record: Ormoško jezero on 2nd-3rd January 1993. SPAIN First record: Sanxenxo, Pontevedra, on 27th December 1992*.

Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrhaptes paradoxus* FINLAND First record since 1969: Kuusamo on 10th June 1992 (13 previous records).

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* GREAT BRITAIN Range contraction: major southerly and easterly contraction since 1968-72 (1988-91 *Atlas*).

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* FRANCE Second record: adult on 16th October 1988 (*Alauda* 61: 248; *Ornithos* 1: 14).

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* FRANCE Escape/vagrant: male (often singing) at Pas-de-Calais from 6th March 1992 to August 1993 (*Alauda* 61: 254; *Ornithos* 1: 19).

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* SWEDEN Second record: Kullahalvön, Skåne, on 29th July 1993* (on same date as first record 25 years earlier).

Didric Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* ISRAEL First record: Eilat, 13th-20th March 1994* (second record for West Palearctic).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* IRELAND Vagrant: Co. Donegal on 6th October 1989 (total now eight, *Irish Birds* 5: 96).

Striated Scops Owl *Otus brucei* ISRAEL Vagrants: two at Eilat during November 1993 to March 1994.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* LUXEMBURG Expansion: 12 occupied sites, five pairs successful, in 1993 (population first established in 1982, by natural colonisation from reintroduced population in Germany, *Brit. Birds* 80: 13).

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* GREAT BRITAIN Census total: over 3,000 churring males recorded in 1992 by BTO/RSPB survey, an increase since 1981.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* CANARY ISLANDS Confirmed breeding: El Hierro during springs of 1991 and 1992 (*Ardeola* 40: 99). FRANCE First record outside breeding range: Gironde on 21st May 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 248; *Ornithos* 1: 14). NORWAY Correction: third record was in June 1989 (not 1988, *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 221).

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* GREAT BRITAIN Second record: Cley, Norfolk, on 30th May 1993*.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* CANARY ISLANDS Vagrants: Tenerife on 4th June 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 188), and Fuerteventura in April 1993*.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* BULGARIA First record: three, among European Bee-eaters *M. apiaster*, at Atanasovo Lake on 18th September 1993 (*Neophron* 3: 20). FRANCE Fifth record: juvenile on Ouessant on 15th October 1993*.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* BELARUS Third breeding record: two pairs at nests with young near Shumilino, Vitebsk region, in early August 1993. LATVIA Fourth record: Riga on 1st August 1993. POLAND Breeding-range change and first breeding in western Poland since 1972: two pairs near Brzeg, Silesia, in July 1993 (breeding near Wladyslawowo, Baltic coast, during 1986-87 and in 1991, *Notatki Orn.* 33: 323).

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius* SWEDEN Second record since 1982 and first from Gotland: Kronholmen, Gotland, on 28th August 1993* (became extinct in 1982, *Brit. Birds* 77: 238; presumably vagrant from Latvia, where species increasing, *Brit. Birds* 86: 285).

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos* FINLAND Large influx: about 125 different individuals in autumn 1993 (twice as many as breed in Finland). SWEDEN Influx: at least ten, including first in Gotland since turn of the century, in autumn 1993 (extremely rare and threatened breeder, almost never seen outside few remaining breeding areas).

Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* ISRAEL First record: Eilat in October 1993*.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* SLOVAKIA First record and first breeding records: three near Vyšná Rybnica in 1991, where three pairs in 1992, also four pairs, including nest with four young, at Jovsa in 1992 (this would also be first breeding in former Czechoslovakia).

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* NORWAY Vagrants: 2nd June 1989, 7th June 1989 (not 1984), 14th-16th May 1991 and 25th May 1991 (total becomes ten; *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 215, 221).

Cliff Swallow/Cave Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota/H. fulva* CANARY ISLANDS First record: juvenile at Las Galletas, Tenerife, on 30th September 1991 (*Ardeola* 40: 188).

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* DENMARK Best-ever autumn total: about 52 in 1993. FRANCE Vagrants: 21st February and 1st March 1981, 19th October 1986, 20th September 1990, 9th October 1990, 12th October 1991, 27th September 1992, 29th September 1992, 7th-21st October 1992 and 20th-21st October 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 248; *Omithos* 1: 14-15). IRELAND Vagrants: Co. Cork on 21st April 1992, 26th September 1992 and 6th-11th October 1992 (total now 46; *Irish Birds* 5: 96). MOROCCO Wintering: up to three at Oued Massa from 1st December 1993 to 7th January 1994, and one at Merja Zerga on 7th January 1994; date extension: two at Oued Massa (*Brit. Birds* 85: 457) stayed from at least 9th January to 6th March 1992 (*Porphyrio* 5: 127).

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* FINLAND Vagrant: Kristiinankaupunki on 20th October 1993*. GREAT BRITAIN Fourth and fifth records: Fair Isle, Shetland, on 31st October to

4th November 1993* and St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, on 20th-22nd October 1993* (second and third records are also both still being assessed).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* IRELAND Vagrant: Co. Cork on 5th October 1992 (total now six; *Irish Birds* 5: 96). NORWAY Vagrants: 11th October 1988, 29th-30th September 1990 (not October, *Brit. Birds* 86: 43) and 30th September 1991 (total becomes 17; *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 215, 222); Utsira, Rogaland, on 1st-2nd October 1992.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* FINLAND Fifth record of race *feldegg*: adult male in Vehkalahu on 6th May 1992. NORWAY Breeding records: of grey-headed race *thunbergi* on 16th July 1991 and of nominate blue-headed race on 30th May 1992. Vagrants: seven of race *flavissima* during 1992 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 243).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* BULGARIA Second record: Durankulak Lake, northeastern Bulgaria, on 31st March 1993 (*Neophron* 3: 20). ESTONIA Third record: juvenile trapped at Pikla, Pärnumaa District, on 19th July 1993 (first and second were in 1991, *Brit. Birds* 85: 457); hybrid juvenile Citrine × Yellow Wagtail *M. citreola* × *M. flava* trapped at same place on 18th July 1993. FINLAND Sixth interbreeding record: adult male breeding with female Yellow Wagtail *M. flava* in Kristiinankaupunki in summer 1992. NORWAY Vagrants: adult males on 14th October 1989, 18th June 1990 and 19th-20th May 1991, and juveniles on 7th August 1991 and 20th October 1991 (total becomes 25; *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 215). POLAND Correction: largest-ever influx, in spring 1993, was of 42 (not 24) individuals (*Brit. Birds* 87: 10). SPAIN Fifth record: ringed at Ebro Delta on 27th September 1992.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* FINLAND First winter record: Åland from 4th January to February 1994. LATVIA Second breeding record: adults with young at Vaive, Cesis district, during May 1993 (first was in 1991).

White-cheeked Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys* ISRAEL Third record: Eilat in October 1993.

Garden Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus* FRANCE Escape/vagrant: Camargue individual (*Brit. Birds* 86: 287), which appeared after southerly storms, was adult, present from 5th October 1992 to 2nd May 1993 (*Alauda* 61: 254; *Omithos* 1: 20).

Black-throated Accentor *Prunella atrogularis* FINLAND Second record: Uusikaupunki on 23rd-24th October 1993*.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* SPAIN
First record: ringed at Granada on 12th September 1993*.

Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* ESTONIA First record: trapped at Prangli, Põlvamaa District, on 18th June 1993.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* FRANCE First record: female or immature on Ouessant, Finistère, on 27th October 1993*. SWEDEN Eleventh record: Hartsö Enskär, Södermanland, on 24th September 1993*.

Güldenstädt's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogaster* FINLAND First record: male in Iittala on 11th-20th October 1993*.

Plumbeous Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus* SWEDEN First record: origin of June 1993 individual (*Brit. Birds* 87: 10) still uncertain (Central Asian butterfly occurred in Sweden and Finland at this time).

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* FRANCE Vagrants of eastern race *maura/stejnegeri*: 13th October 1991 and 9th-10th October 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 249; *Orniethos* 1: 15). ITALY Second record of race *maura*: female at WWF Natural Reserve, Latium region, on 6th November 1992 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 63: 109).

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* FRANCE Third record: Camargue on 12th-13th May 1992 (first two were on 27th September 1970 and 31st May to 1st June 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 21; *Alauda* 61: 249; *Orniethos* 1: 15). IRELAND First record: Mizen Head, Co. Cork, on 10th-17th October 1992 (*Irish Birds* 5: 97).

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* FRANCE First record: 25th October 1991 (*Alauda* 61: 249; *Orniethos* 1: 15; records on 29th April 1990 and at end of May 1990, *Brit. Birds* 84: 9, now rejected and still being assessed, respectively). NETHERLANDS Fourth record: on Vlieland, Friesland, on 7th-8th October 1993.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* BELGIUM Correction: date of first record (*Brit. Birds* 85: 458, plate 192) was 14th-25th July 1991. FINLAND Fifth record: female in Inkoo from 28th September to 3rd October 1993*. IRELAND Third record: first-summer male on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 26th-27th May 1992 (*Irish Birds* 5: 97).

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* BELGIUM First record: 13th-15th October 1991 (*Oriolus* 59: 96). Deletion: record on 1st October 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 349) now rejected. IRELAND First record: Carnsore Point, Co. Wexford, on 11th-21st March 1990 (*Irish Birds* 5: 73-74).

SWITZERLAND First record: 19th-23rd December 1992 (*Nos Oiseaux* 42: 217; *Orn. Beob.* 90: 260).

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens* CYPRUS First record: Paphos Headland on 10th April 1993.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* FINLAND Second record: male at Pyhäjärvi on 28th July to 3rd September 1992 (*Lintumies* 27: 233). Correction: record from 24th October to 3rd November 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 458, plate 190) was of first-winter male (not adult female).

Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* NORWAY Seventh record: adult male at Utsira, Rogaland, on 4th September 1986.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* FRANCE Third record: Saint-Vit, Doubs, on 22nd October 1993* (locality is far inland).

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni* CYPRUS Second record: Cape Greco on 25th April 1993 (first was on 11th November 1958). FRANCE Vagrant of race *eunomus*: Pas-de-Calais on 23rd November 1983 (*Alauda* 61: 150; *Orniethos* 1: 15).

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* NORWAY Vagrants: first-winter male of black-throated race *atrogularis* during 1st-9th October 1991 (total becomes 17, of which three were of nominate, red-throated race; *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 217); also first-winter *atrogularis* at Finnoy, Rogaland, on about 5th-19th December 1987 (found dead on last date).

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* BELGIUM Second record: 5th October 1991 (*Oriolus* 59: 96).

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* GREAT BRITAIN Population decrease: breeding range unchanged, but in all areas substantially fewer 10-km squares occupied than during 1968-72 (1988-91 *Atlas*).

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* FINLAND Second breeding record: same pair breeding in same place in Nummi-Pusula in summer 1992 as in 1991 (ringed in 1991). NORWAY Fourth to sixth records: 30th May to 6th June 1991, adult singing at Slevdalsvann, Lista, Vest-Agder, on 28th May to 5th June 1992*, and adult ringed at Lista, Vest-Agder, on 20th August 1993* (previous records were in May 1968, June 1971 and May-June 1979; *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 217).

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* BELGIUM Fourth record: 19th September 1991 (*Oriolus* 59: 96). BULGARIA Second breeding locality: female with brood-patch at Atanasovo

Lake in July 1989 and singing male at same locality on 23rd May 1993 (*Proc. Sci. Conf. Apr. 1990, Stavropol, Acad. Sci. USSR*: 58-60; *Neophron* 3: 20). FRANCE Fourth record: caught in Camargue on 4th October 1993*. GERMANY Second record: Heligoland on 5th October 1993*. NORWAY First record: first-winter on 19th October 1990 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 217). SLOVENIA First record: trapped at Cerknisko jezero on 28th August 1992.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* BELGIUM First and second records: Herne on 19th September 1988 and 28th September 1992.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* FAROE ISLANDS Influx: five on 2nd October 1993* and three in the following week* (this doubles total to 16).

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* SWEDEN First record: individual of race *opaca* at Eggegrund, Gästrikland, on 25th September 1993*.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* FINLAND Highest-ever total: five in 1992. ISRAEL Wintering: individual of the race *rama* in Eilat in winter 1993/94 (less than ten previous records, all on passage). SWEDEN Fourth record: Ottenby, Öland, on 26th August to 2nd September 1993*.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* NORWAY First record: adult ringed at Lista, Vest-Agder, on 14th August 1992*.

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* GREAT BRITAIN Third record: St Abbs Head, Borders, 23rd-27th May 1993. MALTA Vagrant: January 1994 (last record was in 1982).

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* BELGIUM Fourth record: Wannegom-Lede on 18th April 1992.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* UKRAINE Third record and first in Crimea Peninsula: two adult males on 25th April 1990.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* FRANCE Vagrant: male at Harelolot, Pas-de-Calais, northern France, on 29th November 1993. NETHERLANDS Fifth record: male at Lauwersoog, Groningen, on 30th October to 17th November 1993. SPAIN Range expansion: small population firmly established in coastal areas of Bay of Biscay (Vizcaya and Santander), where breeding first recorded in 1986 (*Ardeola* 40: 81-85). UKRAINE First record: adult male at Tarkhankoot, Crimea Peninsula, on 9th-13th October 1991.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nama* CANARY ISLANDS

First record: Fuerteventura during April 1993*. FINLAND First spring record: Närpiö on 23rd May 1992 (six previous records). SWEDEN Eleventh record: Furilden, Gotland, on 6th October 1993*.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* NORWAY Second since 1989: pair in Finnmark on 22nd-23rd June 1991 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 219).

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* BELGIUM Vagrants: 11th-12th October 1989, 25th October 1990, 26th October 1991, 27th-29th October 1991 and 15th-16th November 1991 (total 26 to end of 1991, *Oriolus* 59: 96). DENMARK Vagrants: four in 1993*. FINLAND Vagrants: 14 in autumn 1992. FRANCE Vagrant: Vannes, Morbihan, on 2nd November 1993*. NORWAY Vagrant: 7th October 1989 (total becomes 50; *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 219).

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* BELGIUM Second record of *P. i. humei*: 27th October to 10th November 1991 (*Oriolus* 59: 97). Correction: 3rd-6th November 1988, not 3rd-6th August 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 12) (*Oriolus* 59: 97). DENMARK Vagrants: about 15 in 1993. Second record of race *humei*: Christianso, Bornholm, on 27th-31st October 1993*. FAROE ISLANDS Vagrants: 2nd October 1993* and 3rd October 1993* (total now 22 records). FINLAND Vagrants: 36 in autumn 1992. FRANCE Vagrants: 35 records involving at least 41 individuals in 1992 (third-best recent year, exceeded by 94 in 1988 and 46 in 1989, but exceeding the 30 in 1986 and 28 in 1985, *Alauda* 61: 250; *Ornithos* 1: 16). Low autumn numbers: about 15 on Ouessant during October 1993*, singles at Haringzelle, Pas-de-Calais, on 10th-11th October 1993*, at cap Gris-Nez, Pas-de-Calais, on 16th-20th October 1993*, and on Sein Island, Finistère, on 17th-21st October 1993*. IRELAND Vagrants: 16 in October 1992 (*Irish Birds* 5: 98). LATVIA Small numbers: only two trapped at Pape, Liepāja district, on 22nd September and 30th October 1993. NORWAY Vagrants: 1992 records listed in *Vår Fuglefauna* (16: 244). SWITZERLAND Fifth record: 8th October 1992 (*Nos Oiseaux* 42: 218; *Om. Beob.* 70: 261).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* BELGIUM Fifth record: Zeebrugge on 21st-22nd October 1991.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* BELGIUM Vagrants: 12th October 1991 and 26th October 1991 (total 11 to end of 1991, *Oriolus* 59: 97). SWITZERLAND First record: 19th-23rd October 1992 (*Nos Oiseaux* 42: 219; *Om. Beob.* 90: 261; 91: 56-58).

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* HUNGARY Second record of race *tristis*: one singing near Balmazújváros on 1st October 1993*.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* MOROCCO Second record: Merja Zerga on 17th February 1990 (in same area, but probably not the same individual as that on 16th November 1990, *Brit. Birds* 85: 13, which now becomes third record).

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* GREAT BRITAIN Escape/vagrant: Shetland on 1st-2nd July 1992, regarded as possible escape and not admitted to British & Irish List (placed in Category D; *Ibis* 136: 253-256).

Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki* GREAT BRITAIN Escape/vagrant: Humberside on 16th-17th November 1991, regarded as possible escape and not admitted to British & Irish List (placed in Category D; *Ibis* 136: 253-256).

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata* MOROCCO Fourth record: male at Ait Bougmez, High Atlas, on 14th April 1993 (records on 20th April 1993 and 26th April 1993, *Brit. Birds* 87: 12, now become fifth and sixth).

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* BELARUS First nest record: nest with young near Cherven, Minsk region, on 15th July 1993. NORWAY Influx: at least 38 in 1991 (total becomes at least 98; cf. influx in 1990, *Brit. Birds* 84: 234; *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 219-220).

Marsh Tit *Parus palustris* IRELAND First record: Bray, Co. Wicklow, on 17th December 1990 (*Irish Birds* 5: 74-75).

European Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* GREAT BRITAIN Range expansion: northward spread of breeding range since 1968-72 (1988-91 *Atlas*); first successful nesting in Scotland was in 1989.

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* NETHERLANDS First breeding record: southern Limburg during 1993.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* BELGIUM First confirmed breeding in Wallonia: Namur province during April-July 1993 (*Aves* 30: 69-71).

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* CYPRUS Second record: Ezousa River on 21st April 1993 (first was in April 1991). GERMANY Third record: Heligoland on 2nd-5th October 1993*. NETHERLANDS First record: Texel, Noordholland, on 21st October 1993*.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* IRELAND Fifth record: Hook Head, Co. Wexford, on 1st June 1992 (*Irish Birds* 5: 99).

Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyana* FRANCE Escape/vagrant: Tenteling, Moselle, on 28th-31st December 1991 (*Alauda* 61: 254; *Ornithos* 1: 20).

Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes* BELGIUM Influx: three in Flanders in October 1991 (*Oriolus* 59: 97). FRANCE Small influx: scattered records in Lorraine, Massif Central, Ain, and single at cap Gris-Nez in September-October 1993.

Yellow-billed Cough *Pyrhocorax graculus* GIBRALTAR Fifth and sixth records: seven flying north on 17th May 1993, and two flying north on 26th September 1993.

Red-billed Cough *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax* FRANCE Outside usual range: two around cap Blanc-Nez in June 1993 and one at Le Portel, Pas-de-Calais, on 11th November 1993. IRELAND Census: in 1992, 906 pairs, with 220 pairs proved breeding, 209 probably breeding and 477 possibly breeding, plus 821 birds in flocks; this 1992 census shows a 33.7% increase on 1982 census figures (*Irish Birds* 5: 1-10). SLOVAKIA First record (or perhaps escape): Čalovec, Komarno district, on 12th June 1990 (*Sylvia* 29: 107-109), would also be first for former Czechoslovakia.

Carriion Crow *Corvus corone* FRANCE Decline of 'hooded' race *C. c. comix* in northern France: five or six during winter 1993/94 (nearing extinction as wintering bird, several hundreds 20 years ago). GREAT BRITAIN Range changes: zone of intergradation between black form *C. c. corone* and 'hooded' form *C. c. comix* has moved farther northwest by about 30 km since 1968-72 (1988-91 *Atlas*).

Common Raven *Corvus corax* NETHERLANDS Reintroduction success: after extirpation in 1920s, reintroduced in 1960s, three to nine pairs breeding annually in the Veluwe, Gelderland, in 1976-86, and increasing markedly since 1987, to 50 breeding pairs plus 31 territorial pairs in 1992 (*Limosa* 66: 107-166).

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* GREAT BRITAIN Fourth and fifth records: males at Martin's Haven, Dyfed, on 18th May 1993 and on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 11th-19th August 1993. NORWAY Correction: second record was on 21st July 1990 (not 22nd, *Brit. Birds* 84: 235; *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 220).

Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus* IRELAND First record: Galley Head, Co. Cork, on 12th-17th October 1985 (*Irish Birds* 5: 76-78).

Red-fronted Serin *Serinus pusillus* GREAT BRITAIN Escape: Suffolk in June 1992, identification accepted, but not admitted to British & Irish List (nor even admitted to Category D; *Ibis* 136: 253-256).

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* FAROE ISLANDS First record: on ship northwest of Streymoy on 18th October 1993* (later died).

Siskin *Carduelis spinus* GREAT BRITAIN Increase and range expansion: substantial increase in breeding numbers and breeding range since 1968-72, associated with maturing of planted conifers (1988-91 *Atlas*).

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* GREAT BRITAIN Influxes: breeding much more numerous and widespread during 1988-91 than during 1968-72 (1988-91 *Atlas*).

Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica* GREAT BRITAIN Status: no updated population estimate was made from 1988-91 *Atlas* data, owing mostly to identification problems; latest estimate 1,500 individuals, based on surveys in 1975 and 1981-84.

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* FRANCE First record: cap Gris-Nez on 26th September 1992 (previously accepted first record, in May 1974, *Brit. Birds* 74: 263, no longer accepted; *Alauda* 61: 251; *Omithos* 1: 17).

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* FAROE ISLANDS Fifth record: single which had been ringed on Fair Isle, Shetland, Great Britain, on 18th September 1993 was recaptured on Nólsoy on 2nd October 1993*. FRANCE Revised details of numbers and first breeding records: 17 singing males, including six breeding pairs (at least two with young), at Pas-de-Calais, Doubs and Jura in 1993 (these details replace those given in *Brit. Birds* 87: 13). MOROCCO Second record: female or immature at Oued Massa estuary on 9th January 1994 (first was in October 1980, *Alauda* 53: 146).

Pallas's Rosefinch *Carpodacus roseus* GREAT BRITAIN Escape: Orkney from 2nd June to 14th July 1988, identification accepted, but not admitted to British & Irish List (nor even admitted to Category D).

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* LATVIA Massive influx: about 50,000 on migration at Pape in autumn 1993.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* ICELAND Ninth record: Staður í Grindavík, Gull, on 25th September 1993*.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* GREAT BRITAIN First record: Pennington Flash, Greater Manchester, from 8th March 1994*. NETHERLANDS Second record: first-year male on Schiermonnikoog, Friesland, on 28th October 1993* (first was on 16th November 1986, *Dutch Birding* 9: 108-113).

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* FRANCE First record since 1977: 4th-11th May 1992 (*Alauda* 61: 252; *Omithos* 1: 18).

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* BELGIUM Third record for Wallonia: first-year male at Wanne, Logbierme, Lieve, on 21st March 1992 (first and second were in 1928 and 1946); sixth and seventh records for Flanders: at least two at Knokke/Zwin on 10th October 1992. SPAIN Second record: Albufera de Valencia on 7th October 1992. SWITZERLAND Fifth record: 31st October 1992 (*Nos Oiseaux* 42: 220; *Om. Beob.* 90: 262).

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* SWITZERLAND Fourth record: 6th June 1992 and 15th June 1992, regarded as referring to same individual (*Nos Oiseaux* 42: 220; *Om. Beob.* 90: 262).

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* GREAT BRITAIN Decrease and range contraction: numbers fell by at least 60% and range contracted by 45% between the early 1970s and early 1990s (*Brit. Birds* 87: 106-132).

Lazuli Bunting *Passerina amoena* GREAT BRITAIN Escapes: all British records regarded as referring to escapes from captivity (*Ibis* 136: 253-256). NORWAY Presumed escape: one in 1991 (total becomes six: *Vår Fuglefauna* 16: 221).

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* SWEDEN Reclassification as probable escape: Mälby, Medelpad, on 28th April to 1st May 1989.

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* GREAT BRITAIN Escapes: all British records regarded as referring to escapes from captivity (*Ibis* 136: 253-256).

Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* GREAT BRITAIN Escapes: all British records regarded as referring to escapes from captivity (*Ibis* 136: 253-256).

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Announcement



Rarities Committee's next new member A vacancy will occur in the ranks of the British Birds Rarities Committee* on or before 1st April 1995 from resignation or the longest-serving member's automatic retirement. As usual, the Rarities Committee invites nominations, which should be sent to the address below by 31st December 1994. If there is more than one nomination, a postal referendum will take place, in which county and regional recorders and bird observatories will be invited to vote, in the traditional democratic election.

Qualifications required for membership of the Rarities Committee include a widely acknowledged expertise in identification, with overseas as well as British experience; a proven reliability in the field; the ability to express oneself clearly and accurately on paper; and the willingness to set aside ten to 12 hours of spare time each week throughout the year. All nominations will be welcomed, but especially any from underrepresented regions (northwest England/Wales) and, since the current ten members are all over 30, from candidates aged 20-30 years. It is also a regrettable fact that membership of the Committee has, throughout its life, remained wholly male: a characteristic that we should like to see changed as soon as possible.

ROB HUME

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Bird Photograph of the Year

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Take the best work of 1993 by the cream of Europe's bird-photographers, and you are sure to enjoy the show: but judging the best of the best becomes extraordinarily difficult.

Such was the pleasure and the pain faced by photographic consultant, Don Smith, Richard Chandler (both active photographers), Rob Hume (who uses a great many transparencies in his professional role as editor of *Birds*) and Tim Sharrock when it came to judging this year's competition. Fortunately, the pleasure endures most, although the pain of seeing a particular favourite fail at the final hurdle is acute: most pictures were winners, but only one can win.

1st Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* (plate 81), Alan Williams, Essex

2nd Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (plate 82), Dr Kevin Carlson, Norfolk

3rd Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis* (plate 83), Conrad Greaves, York

4th Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* (plate 84), P. Munsterman, Netherlands

5th Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* (plate 85), Mike Lane, West Midlands

6th= Red-legged Partridges *Alectoris rufa* (plate 87), Chris Knights, Norfolk

6th= Blue-cheeked Bec-eaters *Merops superciliosus* (plate 86), Jens Eriksen, Oman

8th Ross's Gulls *Rhodostethia rosea* (plate 88), P. Munsterman

9th Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*, Gordon Langsbury, Berkshire

10th Great Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula*, Gordon Langsbury

11th= Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*, Tony Hamblin, Warwickshire

11th= Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*, David Cottridge, London

11th= Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Mike Lane

14th= Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, Dr Peter Gasson, Surrey

14th= Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, E. A. Janes, Hertfordshire

16th Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*, Hanne Eriksen, Oman

17th Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, R. J. C. Blewitt, West Midlands

18th= Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*, Dave Robinson, Northumberland

18th= Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Dave Robinson

20th Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, Alan Williams

21st= Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Mike McKavett, Lancashire

21st= Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Hanne Eriksen

23rd Spectacled Warbler, Paul Hopkins, Cornwall

24th Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, Roger Tidman, Norfolk

25th House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Tim Loseby, Kent

26th= Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Bob Glover, Essex

26th= Great White Egret *Egretta alba*, Jens Eriksen

Runners-up: Edmund Fellowes (Whooper Swan); Bertrand Delprat (Mediterranean Shearwater); Hans Schouten (Common and Mediterranean Gulls); Oene Moedt (Black-tailed Godwits); Bill Coster (Ross's Gulls); Phil Collier (Red Grouse); Dr Mark Hamblin (Little Owl; Slavonian Grebe); Graham Taylor (Yellowhammer); Terry Button (Hedge Accentor).

'The Windrush Award', for the best set of photographs from a photographer aged 21 or under, was won by Bertrand Delprat of St Aunes, France.

We sympathise with photographers who work solely in Britain and Ireland. The weather may offer wonderful 'effects', but not so often is it helpful when competing with those working in perpetually sunny climes. More than that, there is a relative lack of opportunity to see many individuals, of many species,

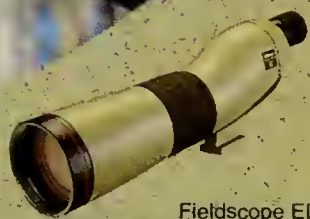




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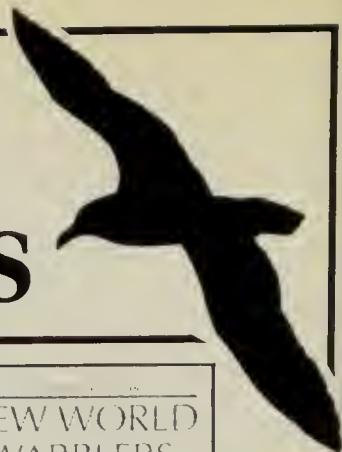
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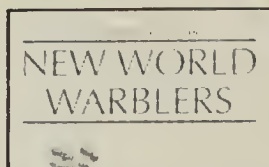
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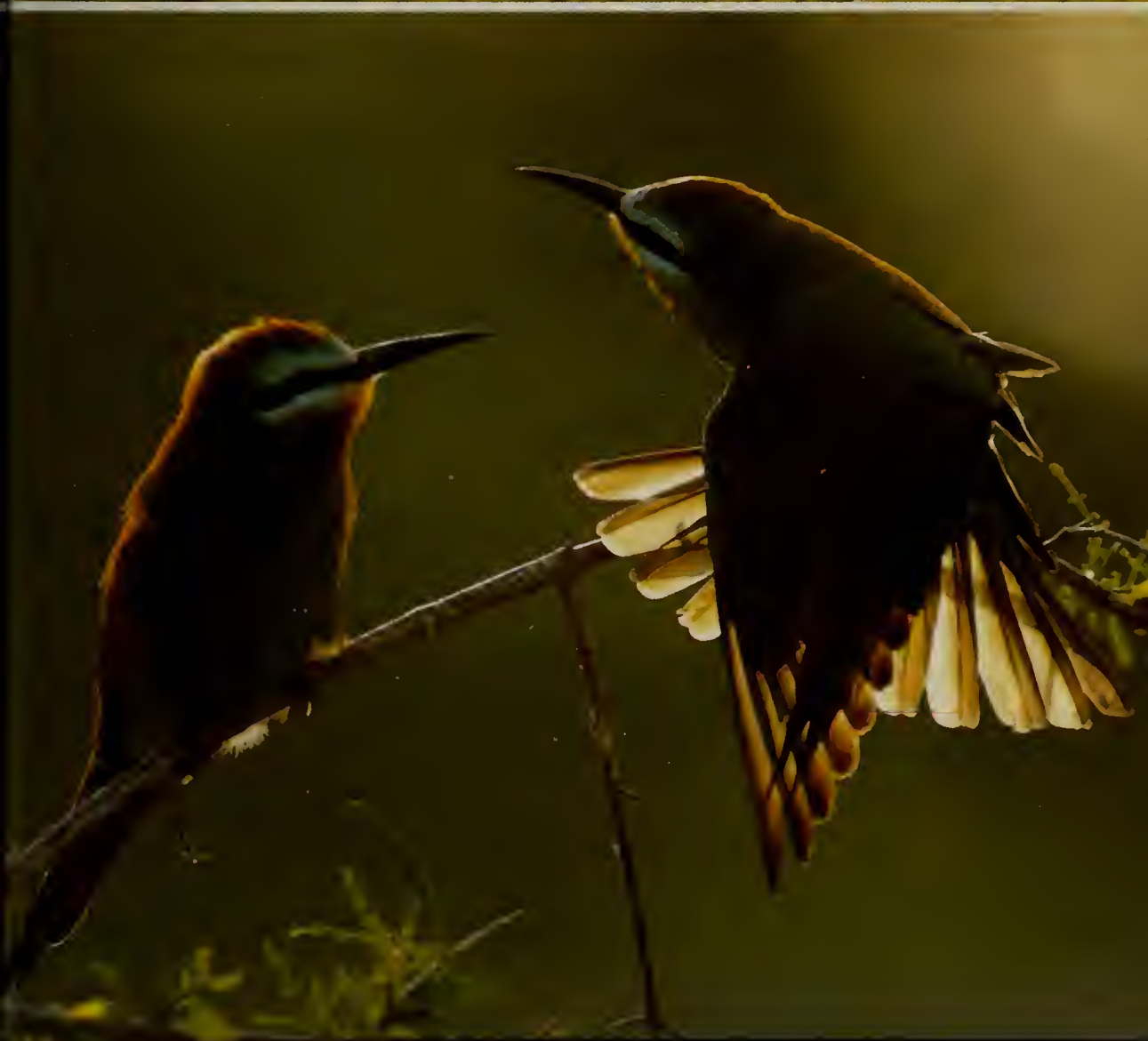
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that allow extremely close approach in the open, or are in situations in which photographers can set up a hide or use a vehicle to get close. Yes, it is possible, but so many bird hotspots are now (thankfully) reserves where individual hides and close stalking are impossible, so much land is 'private', and most birds are so wary, that photography is not so easy as it may be in, for example, Florida, California or West Africa.

The rules, which call for a single winning picture, deliberately help the amateur and the opportunist: we wish to avoid a bias towards sponsored professionals with big budgets and lots of time to take consistently good series, although they are equally welcome to enter. Despite the benefits of extra time in the field, more money for film and ownership of expensive pieces of kit, we think that almost anyone *can* win, without reducing the standard of the competition.

Indeed, this year the standard was exceptionally high: we always say that, but the pictures get better. We judge according to technical quality, scientific interest and aesthetic appeal, so sometimes an 'obvious' top contender may be beaten by a more subtle one showing something particularly special. All the top pictures, however, stand up as aesthetically pleasing and technically excellent examples of their kind. We should like to show every one of them, but do not have space. (Luckily, however, our good relations with the monthly magazine *Bird Watching* is demonstrated by co-operation concerning 'BPY'. Several of the photographs listed earlier will be published in the August issue of *Bird Watching*.)

This was the year of the Ross's Gull, the Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* and the Eurasian Jay, but we were happy to see many pictures of such photogenic species. Superb Spectacled Warblers, Red-throated Diver, Dipper and Black-tailed Godwits also caught the eye and figured in the final debate.

In the end, however, a 'once in a lifetime' achievement took the prize: Alan Williams's stunning juvenile Peregrine Falcon diving at an unseen Kittiwake

81. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1994. Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, diving down cliff face after Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, south coast of England, July 1993 (Nikon F90; Nikon 300 mm; 1/500th, f.5.6; Kodachrome 64) (Alan Williams)

82. Immature Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* collecting mud, Portugal, June 1993 (Nikon 801; Sigma APO 400 mm + 1.4 converter; 1/250th, f.5.6; Kodachrome 64) (Kevin Carlson)

83. Male Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*, Oman, October 1993 (Canon F1; 500 mm Canon; auto, f.5.6; Kodachrome 64) (Conrad Greaves)

84. Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea*, Canada, June 1993 (Nikon 801; Leica 560 mm; 1/250th, f.8; Kodachrome 200) (P. Munsterman)

85. Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* fighting, mid Wales, December 1993 (Canon EOS 5; Canon 600 mm; 1/30th, f.11; Fuji Velvia 50) (Mike Lane)

86. Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters *Merops superciliosus*, Oman, April 1993 (Nikon F4s; Nikon 500 mm + 1.4 converter; 1/60th, f.8; Fuji Velvia 50) (Jens Eriksen)

87. Red-legged Partridges *Alectoris rufa*, Norfolk, June 1993 (Canon EOS 5; Canon 600 mm; 1/180th, f.6.7; Kodachrome 200) (Chris Knights)

88. Ross's Gulls *Rhodostethia rosea* displaying, Canada, June 1993 (Nikon 801; Leica 560 mm; 1/250th, f.8; Kodachrome 200) (P. Munsterman)

Rissa tridactyla. Perfectly sharp, well positioned and large in the frame, such a fast-diving individual would 'not come out quite right' 99 times out of 100. To stop the bird against the shadow (despite the distracting brightly lit cliff too close to its right) was an extra piece of good fortune; the resulting picture is surely one that any photographer would give his eye teeth to have taken. And in the UK, too.

Alan Williams won the competition last year, with his Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, so consistency is a strong point. Kevin Carlson displays that, too, with a string of successes in this competition. He saw the added scientific interest as well as the photographic possibilities of a juvenile Barn Swallow collecting mud at a puddle in Portugal and produced a perfectly composed image of the bird and its shadow, all beautifully exposed and sharply focused (it would never be otherwise from Kevin). *BWP* tells us that, rarely, first-brood juveniles help to feed young of the second brood, but refers to a single report, doubted by others, of a juvenile helping to build a second nest: here we have the individual collecting mud.

Third place went to Conrad Greaves's magnificent Painted-snipe beside a pool in sunny Oman: a great piece of opportunism with a rare species, even there, in an unusually open situation. The sharp plumage detail, revealed by that timely spread of its wings, makes this the perfect, instructive portrait of a thoroughly 'good bird'.

We must mention P. Munsterman's Arctic Terns, so perfect against the subtly shaded snow, and Mike Lane's Common Buzzards at bait, done before but never better. The Blue-checked Bec-eaters photographed by Jens Eriksen—a species/photographer pairing that has appeared before—are so astoundingly good that, had it not been for last year's entry, they may have done even better than equal sixth, with Chris Knights's Red-legged Partridge family, itself so perfectly executed and worthy of the title. The Ross's Gulls (again by P. Munsterman) displaying have all the lively action, tension and striking contrast, set off by those vivid red legs, that we look for in entries. Where would *you* have put that?

The continuation of this annual competition is ensured by its sponsorship by the natural history publishers Christopher Helm Publishers Ltd and HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

The prize-winning photographers and runners-up will all be invited to attend the award presentation at a Press Reception in London this month.

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Notes

Great Cormorant 'playing' in up-currents, and reactions of birds to model sailplane On 8th October 1990, at Watergate Bay, Cornwall, I was flying a radio-controlled model sailplane in orographic lift above the cliffs, where Eurasian Jackdaws *Corvus monedula* and gulls *Larus* were 'playing' in the upcurrent at the cliff edge. The cliffs are about 70 m high and almost vertical. The onshore breeze was slight, and the lift was just sufficient for my sailplane, with a wing loading of 12.5 oz/ft² (3.8 kg/m²), to maintain height. The jackdaws were flying very close to the lip of the clifftop and performing half-rolls, diving steeply down the cliff face and then zooming back upwards to repeat the performance in a follow-my-leader fashion. I was surprised when they were joined by a juvenile Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, which demonstrated excellent soaring skills and followed the jackdaws' flight pattern, including the rapid half-rolls and steep dives. Although cormorants use thermal and orographic lift while in transit, I had never before seen one apparently 'playing' in this manner.

I have noticed that, when I launch a model sailplane into orographic lift above the coastline, the model is frequently joined by gulls, Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo*, Common Ravens *C. corax* and falcons *Falco*, which seem to be triggered into a soaring contest by the sight of the models; the best soaring companion so far has been a Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* in Perthshire, Scotland. These birds often join the soaring sailplane out of an empty sky and then follow it closely for some considerable time. The model is virtually silent except for slight wind hiss at high speed and, perhaps, the sound of electric servos at very close range, so I assume that it is the sight of the model soaring that attracts other birds to the area of rising air.

JOHN STEWART-SMITH

24 Carneton Close, Crantock, Newquay, Cornwall TR8 5RY

Cliff-nesting Great Cormorants regularly 'play' in the upcurrents at their breeding sites, but Mr Stewart-Smith's observation seems of particular interest in view of the flight manoeuvres involved, as well as the reactions of the birds to model sailplanes. EDS

Male Marsh Harrier rearing young brood alone Until they are old enough to feed themselves, nestling Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* are normally fed bill to bill by the female; males are not known to feed young during this early period (*BWP* vol. 2).

During the summer of 1989, however, at a repeat nest in a field of wheat in Norfolk (the first nest, in nearby reeds *Phragmites*, having failed for unknown reasons), a male must have fed a brood of two young chicks directly, following

the disappearance of his mate shortly after hatching. The adults' behaviour appeared normal during incubation, and hatching began around 18th June, but the female disappeared on 28th June and was not seen again in the area. The male continued to deliver prey to the nest, stopping only long enough to leave food. Two days after the disappearance of the female, the brood was almost surrounded by ten prey items, largely intact (some of the small bird items had been decapitated, almost certainly by the male before delivery), but there was no indication of any food in the chicks' crops, and we made no attempt to feed them. During our approach to and while we were at the nest, the young uttered the thin, high-pitched 'squeal' call associated with food-begging, and they appeared to be in a stressed state. The amount of food at the site was now attracting many flies, which frequently settled on the young harriers.

Some intervention was thought essential, before the young died. As there was still no sign of the female, it was decided to visit the nest again that afternoon with a view to fostering out the young to two other Marsh Harrier nests in the area containing small broods of approximately the same age as this one. We were, however, surprised and relieved to find that both chicks now had food in their crops, and that much of the prey that had been largely intact in the morning had now been torn up and eaten. Both young were still on their 'knees' and unable to stand. During the visit the male flew about overhead, uttering a 'chipping' alarm call reminiscent of that of the female. From this moment until fledging, lengthy watches were kept to observe the male's behaviour. It quickly became apparent that the latter had taken on most of the duties normally associated with the female, such as feeding the young, taking in nest material (a substantial platform was built up), keeping the nest clean by removing prey remains, and standing guard for long periods near the site when not away hunting. It is not thought that he brooded the young at all, but luckily the weather was warm and settled at the time. During observations, the longest period that the male spent at the nest site after delivering prey was over 15 minutes, ample time in which to feed the young and much longer than one would expect under normal circumstances; on flying out, he would invariably be carrying prey remains. He also appeared to become much more cautious about visiting the nest for these lengthy periods, being reluctant to deliver food if there was any farm activity, even 300-400 m away in a neighbouring field, of which, under normal conditions and on a quick 'in-and-out' visit, one would not expect him to take much notice.

Both young were on the wing by 27th July, and still being supplied with food by the male. All three remained in the area for at least a further ten days.

It is very unusual for female Marsh Harriers to cease breeding activity during the fledging period, but males, particularly young ones, will occasionally do so, and within a week or ten days after hatching. When this occurs, the female can usually rear the brood on her own quite successfully. Of 44 nests kept under observation and from which young fledged over the five years 1986-90, males disappeared shortly after hatching at two, and at a third the male collided with overhead wires about ten days after the hatch

and was permanently grounded; at all three sites, the females reared broods of four, three and four, respectively.

BOB IMAGE

26 Mount Drive, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 2BP

Osprey carrying partly eaten prey on migration In August 1988, an adult Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* spent several days in the vicinity of Pitsford Reservoir, Northamptonshire. The weather remained dull and overcast until, on 29th, it changed to broken cloud and light westerly winds. At about 09.00 hours on 29th, the Osprey caught a small trout *Salmo* (approximately 0.3-0.4 kg) and took it to a regular perch about 1.5 km away; it began feeding, but ate only the front half of the fish. At about 11.00 hours, having taken time to digest its meal, the Osprey took off, carrying the remaining half of the fish, and began circling around while flapping quite hard to gain height; after some ten minutes, and having gained about 150 m, it then set off, gliding purposefully in a southerly direction, and was not seen again in the county. While gliding, the Osprey held what was left of the fish not in the normal fashion, slung below torpedo-style, but flush up against the underside of the tail, this position presumably being more aerodynamic for a more lightweight package.

JEFF BLINCOW

48 Bush Hill, Northampton NN3 2PE

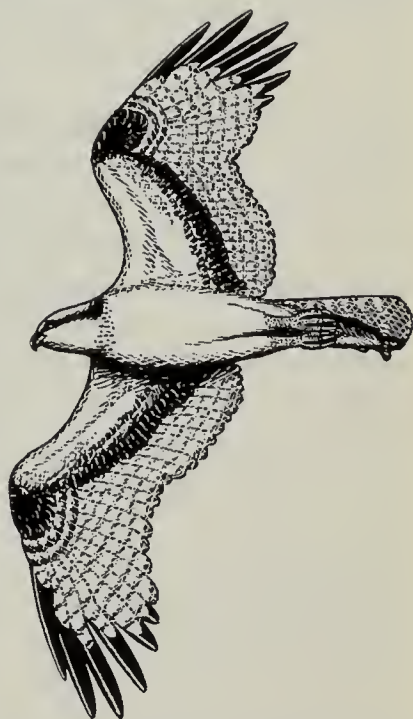


Fig. 1. Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* carrying trout *Salmo* tightly below tail, Northamptonshire, August 1988 (Jeff Blincow)

More Hobbies nesting on pylons With reference to the note by Paul Trodd (*Brit. Birds* 86: 625) concerning the nest of a pair of Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* on a pylon, I can add a further instance of the species using the old nest of a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*, built on a CEGB pylon towards the northernmost extreme of the species' recent breeding range in Britain.

During June 1989, in an open arable area of North Lincolnshire, I located a pair of Hobbies breeding in the old nest of a Carrion Crow in the crown of a 15-m ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, following a report of a pair of 'Merlins' *F. columbarius* in the area the previous summer. No nest was found in 1990, although the pair was present. On 28th June 1991, I visited the nest area and saw the male pass food to the female, which then flew to the old nest of a Carrion Crow situated on the outer arm of the second cross-arm on one of the series of CEGB pylons which cross the area. The female then settled to brood on the nest. The pylons concerned carry 415,000-volt electricity cables and the lower structure is protected with barbed wire surrounding the legs, so the chances of any human intruder taking the eggs seem minimal, at this

particular site at least. I was unable to visit the site again until August, when it appeared to be deserted. Another pair of Hobbies which have bred in Lincolnshire since at least 1988 also regularly perch on the electricity pylons and wires which cross the fields adjacent to their nest sites, situated in nearby copses. The fledged juveniles also use the wires and pylons as hunting posts.

GRAHAM P. CATLEY

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We are grateful to Patrick Nash, who has drawn our attention to the references to pylon-nesting by Hobbies in central Europe in Glutz, Bauer & Bezzel (1971, *Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas*, vol. 4) and *Charadrius* (no. 3, 1990; no. 4, 1992). Ian Dawson has commented that this habit must be fairly recent in Rheinland, since there is no mention of it in *Die Vögel des Rheinlandes* (1982), where Hobby nest sites are listed. EDS

Repeated use of Pied Wagtail nest by Eurasian Treecreepers On 19th May 1982, near Banchory, Grampian, I examined the nest of a Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* which had been used in 1981. It was situated 3 m up in a corner inside a peak-roofed wooden shed that had a permanently open door, and contained four warm eggs which were not those of Pied Wagtail. I watched the shed from a distance: within a minute, a Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* flew from a wood about 30 m away, landed on the shed, climbed up it and disappeared through a small hole at the corner adjacent to the nest. When I checked the nest later that day, a treecreeper flew from the hole to the wood, returning to the nest a couple of minutes later by the same route. On 31st May 1983, the nest contained five treecreeper eggs: the incubating bird left and returned to it in the same manner as in 1982. Treecreepers typically nest behind loose bark or ivy *Hedera helix*, in cracks or crevices on tree trunks or occasionally in crevices in walls or buildings (e.g. Campbell & Ferguson-Lees, 1972, *A Field Guide to Birds' Nests*). The shed was a suitable alternative to a tree, but the use of an old nest of another species would appear unusual.

GRAHAM W. REBECCA

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Twenty-five years ago...

From July 1969 (to at least February 1970), a Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis* frequented the air-base at Lakenheath, Suffolk, its origin always suspicious but never traced.



Reviews

Identification Guide to European Non-Passerines. BTO Guide 24. By Kevin Baker. British Trust for Ornithology, Thetford, 1993. 332 pages; 170 line-drawings. ISBN 0-903793-18-0. £15.00.

This book has been designed for bird-ringers, but it is highly relevant for field ornithologists as well. Indeed, everyone interested in birds should buy a copy. Correct identification is essential for ornithological studies, and the BTO is to be congratulated on the publication of another landmark guide, albeit 16 years after the wader guide.

The introductory section gives an excellent explanation of ageing and sexing techniques. Modern optical equipment gives the opportunity for field ornithologists to use much more detailed plumage characteristics for identification than was previously realised. Being able to identify the age and sex of the birds that you are watching can add considerable value to your observations. It is also good training for the identification of unfamiliar species and subspecies.

Kevin Baker's carefully written text and detailed illustrations are easy to use. Each family has an introduction, giving the basic details of feather structure, moult, and so on. The species accounts then give criteria for differentiating between the sexes and between juvenile and adult plumages. For some species, recognisable differences have been established for more age classes.

Inevitably, comparisons will be made with Svensson's passerine guide, and there will be disappointment because this non-passerine guide makes no attempt to be comprehensive. It is more bulky, but with less information. The spacious layout may be useful for margin notes, but perhaps more thought could have been given to keeping what is essentially a field guide as small as possible.

Most of the species likely to be encountered in Britain and Ireland are covered, but Europeans will be quite disappointed. Some groups are actually covered comprehensively, notably the divers, grebes, waterfowl, rails and crakes. Gamebirds are omitted completely, which is particularly disappointing for Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* aficionados, and wider coverage would particularly have been appreciated for storm-petrels, herons, raptors, gulls, terns, owls and woodpeckers.

It does, however, seem churlish to be critical of such a long and eagerly awaited volume. One must hope that the BTO will persuade Kevin Baker that its extension and revision is a very high priority. This is especially important since the publication is sure to stimulate interest and will result in previously unpublished information being written up and made available. Perhaps a loose-leaf format could be developed which would facilitate piecemeal revision?

The non-passerine guide provides a huge amount of information for only £15—it is a bargain.

STEPHEN RUMSEY

Ecologische Atlas van de Nederlandse Roofvogels. By Rob G. Bijlsma. Schuyt Haarlem, 1993. 350 pages; 179 colour plates; 6 black-and-white plates; numerous distribution maps, figures, histograms and graphs. ISBN 90-6097-348-8. £50.00.

This strikingly illustrated, large-format book is an ecological atlas of raptors, covering the 12 species of diurnal birds of prey that nest or sometimes nest in the Netherlands. The basic data were collected in the northeastern third of the country during 1984-91, but these are supplemented from other regions and from national archives. Thirty local raptor-monitoring schemes have contributed, in a spirit of co-operation that we in Britain must envy, and many

hundreds of observers. Breeding phenology, feeding ecology and, where appropriate to the Netherlands, migration and wintering are discussed both by species and comparatively, and in remarkable detail. National breeding distributions are plotted quantitatively by 5-km squares. Lengthy chapters on Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* and Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, both ubiquitous in larger Dutch forests, are of special interest from the British perspective.

Although in Dutch, the book has bilingual captions to its many maps, graphs and tables, and a full 15-page summary entirely in English. While some information and interpretation is inevitably lost to the non-Dutch reader, the book can be highly recommended to any raptor enthusiast, as a visual feast and as a compendium of hard-won and rarely available data.

JOHN H. MARCHANT

Wildfowl. By Malcolm Ogilvie & Bruce Pearson. Hamlyn, London, 1994. 160 pages; 50 colour plates; 17 black-and-white line-drawings. ISBN 0-600-57973-5. £14.99.

The Hamlyn Bird Behaviour Series has produced books, so far, on *Birds of Prey* and on *Seabirds*. For birdwatchers, the approach is new, and is based on the correct assumption that differences in behaviour are 'an invaluable aid to identification'. Wildfowl are a well-studied group and, in addition, are familiar to anyone who enjoys walking near lakes, reservoirs, rivers or around the coast.

Dr Malcolm Ogilvie is excellently qualified to write such a guide for wildfowl-watchers; he worked for many years for The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, and has written books on ducks and geese, as well as being on the editorial board of *British Birds*. He deals with many patterns of wildfowl behaviour, such as feeding, flying, social and breeding habits, comfort movements, resting and sleeping. A number of detailed aspects are illustrated most attractively by Bruce Pearson. A gazetteer at the end of the book catalogues the best wildfowl-watching sites in Europe. As is often the case with lists, some of the details are out of date; birds, and especially wildfowl, are astonishingly mobile, so that numbers at any particular estuary or nature reserve can double or be decimated within a season or two as populations shift between sites hundreds of kilometres apart.

Malcolm deals with such frequently asked questions as why geese and swans fly in V-formation, who leads the flock and which of the many theories are simplest and therefore the ones likely to be preferred. Queries about the benefits of flocking are also examined, and possible answers are teased out of the conflicting hypotheses.

He is good at describing for his readers how to distinguish the three British swans when they are in flight or sitting on the water at a distance; I know that he himself can distinguish the various British geese in flight, but he does not tell us precisely how he does it. Nevertheless, this is an attractive book which I believe waterfowl enthusiasts will enjoy.

JANET KEAR

Atlas des Oiseaux Nicheurs en Limousin. By SEPOL (Société pour l'Étude et la Protection des Oiseaux en Limousin). Lucien Souny, Limoges, 1993. 221 pages; eight colour plates; 133 line-drawings; 133 distribution maps. ISBN 2-905262-68-0. FF150.

This is the local breeding-bird atlas for three adjoining départements in Central France (Corrèze, Creuse and Haute-Vienne), work for which was carried out during the seven years 1984-90 (with some additional records for 1991) using the standard international categories of breeding evidence, plotted by the 278 10 km × 7 km rectangles of the French 1/50000 map series. The text is wholly in French; the breeding evidence is shown by means of the standard three sizes of dot in green on maps which also show height of land by increasingly dark grey shading.

What makes this atlas stand out from amongst the many others from distant parts of the world is the illustrations by François Desbordes: not only accurate and beautifully observed line-drawings at the heading of each species account, but also eight highly evocative habitat paintings (including typical birds), which really bring this region of France to life for the reader from elsewhere in the world. The illustrations turn this already excellent piece of scientific work into a collector's item for anyone who appreciates bird art.

J. T. R. SHARROCK



Shooting ban reinstated in Cyprus

IF EVER PROOF WERE NEEDED that campaigning works, this must be it. When, in spring 1993, the new President of Cyprus revoked his predecessor's anti-shooting legislation, Bill Oddie and Derek Moore, two well-known names with a long history of campaigning against the shoot, and who happened to be on the island when the announcement was made, immediately set about campaigning to get this reversed once again.

Backed up by many letters of protest, from individuals through to international organisations, and a boycott threat by wildlife tour companies, they gathered a 5,000-name petition at last summer's British Birdwatching Fair which they subsequently presented to the Cypriot High Commissioner in London (plate 89). Perhaps most unexpected, the results of a MORI poll amongst Cypriots themselves showed not only that 87% of the population was against the spring shooting, but also that this included 77% of the hunters.

From March this year, the ban is reinstated, on a more permanent footing, we hope, allowing our summer visitors a somewhat safer passage to their breeding grounds.

Now would be a good time to show your approval by booking a birding holiday on that wonderful island.

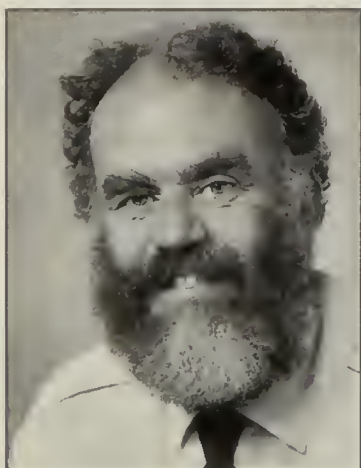
89. Bill Oddie and Derek Moore outside the Cyprus Tourist Office in London just prior to the presentation of a 5,000-signature petition to the Cypriot High Commissioner (*Clive Boursnell/BBC Wildlife*)



The new team

As announced last month (*Brit. Birds* 87: 300), Wendy Dickson takes over from Mike Everett this month, joining Bob Scott as joint compiler of 'News and comment'.

Wendy was formerly with the BBC, where she worked with Dilys Breese on 'The Living World', and with John Burton and others in the Natural History Unit. She also has happy memories of time spent with the Snowy Owls *Nyctea scandiaca* on Fetlar and at Fair Isle Bird Observatory. She is now a freelance naturalist, based in Northumberland, but also regularly visiting Shetland.



Bob Scott



Wendy Dickson

Ups and downs

Bird-ringers taking part in the BTO's Constant Effort Sites Scheme proved that 1993 was a good breeding season for most of Britain's small birds. Adults of Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* and Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* all benefited from a mild winter, while Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*, which winters in east Africa, also increased. On the minus side appeared another migrant, the Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, and the resident Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*, which, along with Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, were the species whose numbers of juveniles caught decreased significantly. The impression is that 1993 was a very successful breeding season, overshadowed by a worrying pattern of decline that is emerging for both adults and young of some seed-eating birds.

The Constant Effort Sites Scheme forms part of the BTO's Integrated Population Monitoring Programme, as does the Waterways Bird Survey, which has now been running for 20 years. Information on long-term trends for 19 species has recently been produced by the BTO, which shows that for only one species, the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, has there been a steady decrease, though numbers of Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* have declined recently. Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus* declined by about 50% over five years to 1983, but have now stabilised. Conversely, Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* and Common Coot *Fulica atra* have shown steady increases, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* some increase.

Photographic Researcher

The Editorial Board is delighted to announce that Robin Chittenden has agreed to act as Photographic Researcher for *BB*, seeking out the best and most appropriate photographs for inclusion with notes and papers. We are very pleased to welcome Robin to the team.

Rarity descriptions

It is very helpful if all observers of rarities send in their descriptions (preferably to the relevant county or regional recorder) as soon as possible after the sighting. It will speed up the decision-making process if notes on all major spring rarities are submitted by mid July at the latest. *Please do not wait until the end of the year.* Thank you. (Contributed by M. J. Rogers)

Young Ornithologists will win £2,800

The three winners of this year's Young Ornithologists of the Year competition (*Brit. Birds* 87: 199) will share prizes worth over £2,800 courtesy of co-sponsors *Barbour*, *Christopher Helm Publishers*, *Hamlyn*, *HarperCollins*, *Kowa*, *Macmillan*, *Pica Press*, *T. & A. D. Poyser* and *Swarovski*. The star prizes will be a *Kowa* TSN-3 20-60 × zoom telescope, worth £934, and two *Swarovski* 8 × 30 SLC III binoculars, each worth £499. All three winners will also each receive a *Barbour* 'Durham' jacket and over £200-worth of bird books.

The judging panel will include:

Robert Gillmor

President of the Society of Wildlife Artists

Dr J. J. D. Greenwood

Director of the British Trust for Ornithology

Peter Holden

Head of the RSPB's Youth and Volunteer Department

Rob Hume

Chairman of the Rarities Committee

B. A. E. Marr

Representing the British Ornithologists' Union

Dr J. T. R. Sharrock

Managing Editor of *British Birds*

Entrants must be aged 21 or under on the closing date of 20th September 1994 and should submit their actual field notebook (not a carefully rewritten version), covering at least a three-month period during May-August 1994, together with their date of birth and a SAE for return of the notebook. The three age groups will be 21 or under, 16 or under and 12 or under. Entries should be sent to Young Ornithologists Competition, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 20th September 1994.

Please encourage any birders aged 10-21 that you know to send in their field notebooks.

Protection in Essex

Dengie has recently been designated a Special Protection Area for Birds under the EC Birds Directive and a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Dengie is, in fact, the first phase of a much larger proposed Mid-Essex Coast SPA, which will include well-known names such as Foulness, the Blackwater Estuary, the Colne Estuary and the River Crouch Marshes.

Consultative strategy for The Wash

No-one who has ever visited The Wash can doubt its value as one of Britain's internationally important estuaries in nature conservation terms. This impression is amply backed up by fact. The largest estuary in England and Wales, it supports the highest numbers of wintering waterfowl of any. Thus, it has national recognition as a SSSI, and international recognition as a SPA and a Ramsar Convention Site. It contains 10% of Britain's saltmarsh. Parts of it are managed as National Nature Reserves, while other reserve areas are in the hands of voluntary conservation bodies. Parts of its southeastern coast have been designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Pretty impressive.

Now, in response to Government encouragement, The Wash Estuary Strategy Group, made up of representatives of local authorities and others with responsibilities for the area, has put together a draft Strategy for Sustainable Management for The Wash. Although 11th April was the final date for comments on the document, it is proposed to consult interested parties again for further views once the First Draft of the Management Plan has been prepared.

For further information, write to Wash Estuary Strategy Group, c/o Norfolk County Council, Department of Planning & Transportation, Norwich NR1 2SG, or Lincolnshire County Council, Department of Highways & Planning, Lincoln LN1 1DN.

Bulgarian lake restoration

Lake Srebarna has the distinction of being one of the few natural sites in the world designated both as a World Heritage Site and as a Biosphere Reserve, and also having importance for the Ramsar Convention. But all is not well. The population of Dalmatian Pelicans *Pelecanus crispus* that it supports is threatened by the lake's rapid eutrophication.

The good news is that in April 1992 the Bulgarian Government and Institute of Ecology requested the Ramsar Convention Bureau to start monitoring the site. It has produced a list of recommendations to reverse the eutrophication problem, upon which the Bulgarian Government is now acting. Evaluation of the restoration process, which includes the provision of an expanded buffer zone around the lake, is due to be assessed about now.

NRA report on fish-eating birds

The National Rivers Authority—faced with increasing concern and a growing volume of circumstantial evidence that fish-eating birds are causing serious damage to certain fisheries (see e.g. *Brit. Birds* 87: 242)—has recently published a report *Fish-eating Birds—assessing their impact on freshwater fisheries*, which it commissioned from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology. While making a valuable contribution to present knowledge of the subject, the Report draws no firm conclusions, owing to lack of controlled scientific experiments.

With duties both to maintain, improve and develop fisheries and to further conservation, the NRA admits that it is no simple task and that the problem varies according to species of

fish-eating bird, species of fish preyed upon, and type of fishery and location. In particular, the difference between stocked stillwaters and rivers is considerable.

With Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* seen as the chief culprit, the NRA believes that in the long term a national cormorant strategy is required, involving all interested parties. At present, however, it is not thought necessary to plan a similar strategy with respect to sawbills *Mergus*. Meanwhile, the NRA intends to fund future ongoing research and, while taking note of the advice contained in the report, to judge each individual case on its merits within the legal framework.

'BB' in Thailand

Superb views of tiger *Panthera tigris*, Coral-billed Ground-cuckoo *Carpococcyx renauldi*, Masked Finfoot *Heliopais personata*, Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi*, Pin-tailed Parrotfinch *Erythrura prasina* and nesting Black Eagles *Ictinaetus malayensis* were the highlights of the

BB/'SUNBIRD' trip to Thailand in February-March 1994, which had been chosen by Hannu Jännes as his prize for winning the fifth 'Monthly marathon' (*Brit. Birds* 86: 226-227; 87: plate 92), which is sponsored by SUNBIRD.



92. BB/'Sunbird' trip to Thailand, February-March 1994. Left to right, Richard Newton, Kamol Komolphalin (leader), Glen & Pam Hvenegaard, JTRS, John Beesley, Hannu Jännes ('Monthly marathon' winner) and Richard Eden; Malcolm Chettleburgh was in Chiang Mai (J. T. R. Sharrock)

French get the bird

On 19th April 1994, the European Parliament voted down (60 for, 140 against) a motion which would have allowed the use of their Urgency Procedure to rush through a French proposal to extend the closing dates of their shooting season. In essence, the French wish to shoot on into the spring migration period; their hunting laws in this respect have already been ruled illegal by the European Court of Justice, but, rather than step into line (as other guilty countries have done—Italy and the Netherlands), the French are seeking to change the European Birds Directive to suit themselves—or, more likely, to appease their politically very powerful hunting lobby.

There was a massive protest from conservation bodies throughout Europe (including those in France) and a great deal of

political lobbying in the run-up to the vote: it has paid off—for the time being.

The proposal will come up again, probably in September 1994, so the story is not yet over. UK conservationists have been disappointed by the feeble line taken by our own government over the issue (even though some of our migrant birds are bound to be involved). It is a pity, too, that our field sportsmen remained conspicuously silent. They follow the sensible principle of abiding by an early close to shooting in the interests of potential breeding birds and concentrate instead on taking part of the post-breeding 'surplus'. It would surely do them no harm to tell the French they ought to do the same.

(Contributed by Mike Everett)

Damage to the Dee?

Last autumn, a company at Mostyn on the Welsh side of the Dee planned to expand the docks. Following representation by conservation groups, the company was directed to submit a planning application rather than simply going ahead with the development. Once the details became apparent, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Dee Estuary Conservation Group and many of its members urged the Secretary of State for Wales to call in the application because of the adverse effects on the Dee Estuary—a designated Special Protection Area and Ramsar site. The development would have involved the infilling of 9 ha of mudflat and the dredging of a new deep-water channel, thereby destroying a wader roost and affecting important wader feeding areas on Mostyn Bank. In late December, John Redwood, Secretary of State, refused to call in the application, saying that the development was only a local issue (this despite the SPA/Ramsar status of the Dee). The local council approved the application on 29th December. Happily, in early February, the Secretary of State for Wales did a U-turn, 'having taken legal advice'. We wait to see whether he sets up a public enquiry or decides on the application himself. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

Concern for Welsh Red Grouse

A recent report from the Countryside Council for Wales highlights the plight of the Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* in the Principality. The *Grouse Moors in Wales 1994* survey estimates only 923 pairs living on 60 heather moors, with highest concentrations on the managed moors of Radnorshire, Clwyd and the Berwyn mountains. The fox *Vulpes vulpes* and crows (Corvidae) are perceived to be the main predators, but lack of heather management, intensive sheep stocking with resultant overgrazing, and increased recreational use of Welsh uplands are also implicated. The report highlights the need to adjust grazing levels, reinstate heather-burning and predator control and generally encourage grouse-moor management schemes.

As well as benefiting a wealth of other wildlife and plants, the report says that 88% of Welsh Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrax* occur on these moors, as well as significant percentages of the populations of Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, European Golden Plover *Pluvialis aprinaria* and Dunlin *Calidris alpina*.

Barn Owl release scheme

Last year saw the implementation of the Barn Owl Release Licensing Scheme by the Department of the Environment, acting on recommendations from their own Barn Owl Working Group in response to concern about haphazard releases. It transpires that 78

schemes were licensed in 1993 permitting the release of over 520 Barn Owls *Tyto alba*. How many have been successful it is too early to say, but it is intended to review the results of the first year's licences and refine the guidelines as necessary.

Scientists and conservationists at Shuttleworth

Organised in conjunction with the RSPB, the JNCC, the WWT and the BTO, the British Ornithologists' Union's annual conference was held at Shuttleworth College, Old Warden, Bedfordshire, during 6th-10th April 1994. BOU conferences are usually held over a weekend, but this extra-long five-day meeting (from Wednesday afternoon to Sunday lunch) was fully justified by the programme, with over 40 papers on the subject of 'Bird Conservation: the science and the action'.

The conference was fully subscribed, with 220 participants from over 20 countries. After the opening address by RSPB Chief Executive, Barbara Young, the scene was set with a masterly historical survey by Max Nicholson. The second day commenced with the first Alfred Newton Lecture, by Ian Newton, on 'Experiments on the limitation of bird numbers'. All that happened in five days cannot be summarised in a short report such as this, so it is pleasing to be able to report that the majority of the papers will be published in full in a special issue of *Ibis*.

One contribution created a stir amongst those not already familiar with the predicted effects of global warming. Brian Huntley of the University of Durham showed how an average increase of, say, a mere 0.3°C per decade would, however, result in winter temperatures in Stockholm, Sweden, rising to those of present-day Athens, Greece, in 100 years' time, together with all the major vegetational changes which would follow (goodbye Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*, hello sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*, in northern Britain). This represents a change equal to the difference between an Ice Age glacial maximum and the present day. As Dr Huntley commented, any efforts to conserve species such as Common

Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia* or Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis* in northern Scotland would be doomed to failure, and similar efforts to conserve Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus* or Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* in southern England would be equally futile, since such species would become common throughout much of Britain. He concluded that conservation efforts should be concentrated not on isolated patches of doomed habitat or on reserves for individual species or special communities, but on the global environment. (This résumé does not do justice to Dr Huntley's contribution: please read the full *Ibis* version.)

Other attractions included field outings, a banquet, Irish accordion and jazz music, poster sessions, four wine receptions (courtesy of Helm Information and Pica Press, OUP, Academic Press and CUP) and even an unexpected snowball fight. Shuttleworth College was an admirable venue, the programme varied and stimulating, and the organisation (mainly by Gwen Bonham and Nicola Crockford) relaxed, smooth and efficient.

The conference concluded with a carefully drafted declaration, emphasising priorities which must be addressed by governments and their agencies, which will also be published in *Ibis* and, we hope, be given wide publicity elsewhere.

The traditional *BB* mystery photographs competition resulted in an amazing 11 all-correct entries: Dr Nicholas Aebischer, Guy Anderson, Peter Cosgrove, Peter Cranswick, Paul Donald, Frank Hawkins, Dr David Parkin, Mike Shepherd, Mrs Dorothy Suter, Werner Suter and Rob Williams (and another 58 entries with only one wrong). The bottle of champagne was won by Guy Anderson, whose name was drawn from the hat. (JTRS)

Ring out the old, ring in the new wader records

The winter of 1992/93 saw the final year of the BTO's Birds of Estuaries count operating independently before it became part of WeBS—The Wetlands Bird Survey, a partnership between the BTO, the WWT, the RSPB and the JNCC. It was, however, rung out in style, producing the biggest-ever UK wader count—1,835,000 birds, headed by Dunlin *Calidris alpina* with 457,461.

With a staggering total of 353,017 birds,

The Wash—the most productive estuary—reached a milestone by becoming the first estuary to exceed one-third of a million birds. Six others held over 100,000 waders.

New volunteer counters are always welcomed by the BTO. Even if your nearest estuary may hold more modest totals, it's a great way to do your bit to help . . . and to enjoy it! For further details, contact the BTO on Thetford (0842) 750050.

Changes to the British & Irish List

The BOU Records Committee has recently made the following decisions:

DELETE FROM CATEGORY A:

Daurian Starling *Sturnus sturninus*

Daurian Starling was added to the British & Irish List on the basis of one seen and trapped on Fair Isle, Shetland, during 7th-28th May 1985 (*Ibis* 133: 218-222; *Brit. Birds* 82: 603-612). This was the only accepted record.

A new review of the literature has failed to find any published records of the species west of 90°E, apart from one collected from a flock of 17 in Pakistan in August 1902 and a juvenile in Norway in September 1985. This suggests that natural vagrancy to Britain is not very likely. Vagrancy is particularly unlikely in spring (see Parkin & Knox in press, *Brit. Birds* 87). In the 1980s, the species occurred in captivity in Britain and on the Continent and escape would therefore have been possible.

The likelihood of natural occurrence is now considered to be low for this individual, and the species is deleted from the List and transferred from category A to category D1.

DELETE FROM CATEGORY B:

Citrel Finch *Serinus citrinella*

Citrel Finch is on the British & Irish List on the basis of a single specimen from near Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, on 29th January 1904.

The specimen, now at the Booth Museum in Brighton, has been reidentified as a Cape (or Yellow-crowned) Canary *S. canicollis*. This is an unlikely natural vagrant to Britain, and the record is no longer acceptable. The species has been deleted from the British & Irish List.

These changes will officially take place with the publication of the 21st Report of the BOU Records Committee in *Ibis* (vol. 136, October 1994).

Irish birders gather at Ballycotton

Every year, the Irish Wildbird Conservancy and the RSPB hold an 'All-Ireland Conference on Bird Conservation'. This year, it was the turn of the IWC to act as hosts and they chose a particularly well-known birding locality as the venue, and 'Birds of the Countryside' as the theme.

Birders from both north and south, and across the water, gathered to hear Richard Mills open the proceedings on the Friday (25th March) evening with some superb photographs and reminiscences about birding and birds near Ballycotton. Next morning, the more formal opening address was delivered by Pat Cox, local Member of the European Parliament. He complimented the IWC on its lobbying activities and encouraged both conservation bodies to work as closely as possible with Brussels. Mr Cox informed all the delegates that he was anxious not to fall into the politicians' trap of being described as someone who has 'finished what they have to say, but regretfully has not yet stopped!'

A summary of the annual activities of IWC was presented by Oran O'Sullivan—1993 was the Conservancy's 25th anniversary—and in-

cluded the exciting news that 427 pairs of Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* nested on Rockabill. Regrettably, Bob Brown's report from the RSPB in Northern Ireland included the sad news that Corn Crakes *Crex crex* were down to eight singing birds.

The bulk of the conference programme concentrated on birds and the agricultural scene in Ireland. A mixture of good and bad news. Exciting developments with the new agri-environment schemes which we must hope come in time to solve the problems faced by the Corn Crake, as reported by Rhys Green, and the Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, as reported by Brendan Kavanagh.

The now-traditional table quiz on the Saturday evening attracted well over 100 of the conference delegates. The eventual winners—a mixed (and nameless) crew from both the organising bodies—achieved their success, at least in the opinion of your reporter, who trailed them by far too many points, by luck rather than judgment. Anyway, congratulations to Clive, Dave, Janet and Oran and we hope you enjoy your prize of a free hotel weekend in Ballycotton.

Bookings for Cape Clear

Cape Clear Bird Observatory has a new Bookings Secretary: Sean Farrell, 81 Ferndale Avenue, Finglas, Dublin 11. (Kieran Grace, the previous Bookings Secretary, is moving to Brussels for four years.)

Happy birthday, Max!

We note with delight that E. M. Nicholson CB CVO, Editor of *BB* during 1951-61 and now one of our Honorary Subscribers, will be celebrating his 90th birthday on 12th July.

Not many birds about?

Most birdwatchers are, we hope, not so single-minded that they ignore other forms of wildlife. Now, on days when there may not be many birds about, you could put your head down instead of up and help record the presence of frogs, toads, newts, snakes and lizards, for a new survey being set up by the JNCC and the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology. The intention is to establish a baseline for distribution, status, preferred habitat and present or perceived threats, to formulate a conservation policy at both national and local levels.

Further information for interested volunteers can be obtained from Steve Gibson, JNCC, Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough PE1 1JY.

Málaga Group

In March, the Málaga group of the Spanish Ornithological Society (SEO) was born. One of its first priorities is to publish an annual bird report for the province, considered by some to be the richest in Iberia, with an estimated 350 species so far recorded. Anyone visiting, or living in, the province is therefore invited, indeed urged, to send in their records in order to produce as complete a report as possible. In return, future plans include not only an annotated checklist of the birds of Málaga province, but also an offer of help and advice wherever possible to foreigners who visit the area. Contact Andy Paterson, Edificio San Gabriel 2-4-A, Escritor Adolfo Reyes, 29629 Torremolinos, Spain.

Nest-boxes for bumblebees

In Wareham Forest, the Forestry Commission's first specially designed bumble-boxes have been perfumed 'à la mouse' to attract queens that normally nest in old mouse-holes. With the loss of rough grasslands, there are fewer mice and voles, leading to a bumblebee housing crisis. Their plight was discovered when the bumblebees started commandeering bird nest-boxes. Let us hope that they get the message. It could start a national trend.

Polish birdwatching society

The second Overseas Members' Newsletter of the Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (OTOP) contains news of their first reserve, purchased, with help from *Swarovski Optic*, at the end of 1993 – a swampy, reed- and sedge-covered island in Swina river mouth called Karsiborska Kepa. It also contains items on Greylag Geese *Anser anser* in Poland, protection of Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*, and, not least, the Society's representation at last year's British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water, the aim of which was to raise money for the Polish Wetlands Project. As a bonus, 107 new overseas members were recruited to the Society's ranks. Mention should also be made of the delightful illustrations throughout the newsletter. Prospective members should contact OTOP, PO Box 335, 80-958 Gdańsk, Poland.

Strangest-ever discovery?

We had already noted the discovery of an unusual partridge-like bird in Tanzania in 1991 (*Ibis* 136: 2-11), apparently related to Indo-Malayan hill partridges *Arborophila*, but so distinctive that it has been put in a new genus, *Xenoperdix*.

Where exactly, however, was the Udzungwa Forest Partridge *X. udzungwaensis* discovered? The erudite *Ibis* paper tells us a great deal of interest, and includes a splendid colour plate by Martin Woodcock, but 'the unofficial background story' in the *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* (1: 24-25) reveals the fascinating discovery.

'During fieldwork in montane evergreen forests in the Udzungwa Mountains, east of Iringa town, Tanzania . . .' says the *Ibis* paper. The *Bull. ABC* exposé, however, reports that, after one of their first days in the forest, the

expedition members were gathered around the camp fire for supper, and 'During the fight to get hold of the remaining bits of chicken, two small chicken-like feet suddenly appeared at the bottom of the pot.' Those feet in the stew were the first evidence of the existence of the Udzungwa Forest Partridge, discovered by the Danish ornithologists because the local village guides had caught a 'kwale ndogo' and popped it into the cooking pot.

The very professional and excellently designed first issue of the *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* contains a lot more of interest. ABC membership is a mere £12 per annum (plus supplements for airmail postage or non-sterling payments); write to the Membership Secretary, ABC, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA. (JTRS)

Twitching in the UAE

Erik Hirschfeld writes from Abu Dhabi with news that the daily newspaper *Emirates News* has started a regular column entitled 'Twitcher's Guide'. The first column, of 17th February 1994, kicked off with news of a bird found by Erik himself—an Eversmann's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythronotus*, previously recorded only about a dozen times in the United Arab Emirates.

Paintings for penguins

At the end of April, Falklands Conservation launched its Penguin Appeal, which aims to raise £750,000 towards conservation in the South Atlantic. As part of this appeal, an exhibition of paintings and prints of wildlife of the southern oceans will be on show from 26th September to 10th October at the London Ecology Centre, 45 Shelton Street, Covent Garden. With prestigious names such as Robert Gillmor and John Busby among the exhibitors, a percentage from the sale of each painting will go towards the Appeal. Further information can be had from Falklands Conservation on 081-343-0831.

Carved birds

A National Exhibition of Carved Birds will be held at Pensthorpe Waterfowl Park, Fakenham, Norfolk, during 3rd-11th September 1994. This year, it is open to carvers from anywhere in the United Kingdom, with all styles of carving and all types of carver welcome to enter, though the carvings must be of birds. As well as the competitive elements, in which a number of awards will be made, there will also be week-end demonstrations. And of course you can look around the 80-ha reserve as well. If you wish to exhibit, send a SAE to the Organiser: Mrs J. Nicoll, 18 Ditton Court Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 7HG.

First-ever National YOC Day

Young people everywhere are invited to the first-ever National YOC Day at the British Birdwatching Fair at Eggleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water, Leicestershire, on Sunday 21st August. Supported by *Land Rover*, there will be a wide variety of practical and fun activities, ranging from environmental games and a YOC roadshow for younger children to conservation careers advice for teenagers. Entrance is free for under-16s, while adults will be asked to pay £6.00.

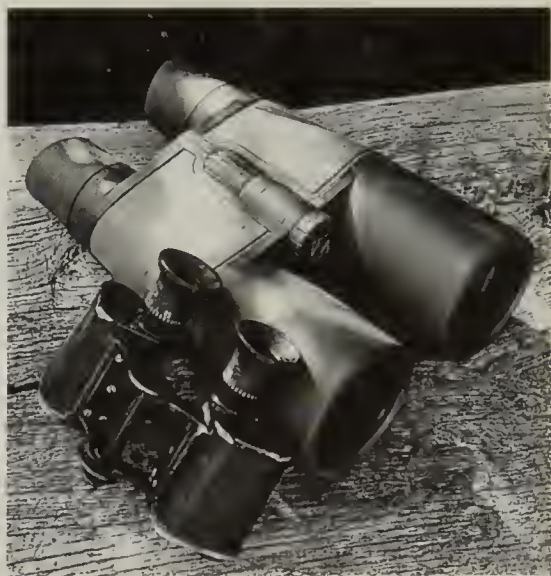
100 Harriers in Suffolk

No, not the current breeding population—at least, not yet! This is the 100th edition of *The Harrier*, the Bulletin of the Suffolk Ornithologists' Group, coinciding with the 20th anniversary of the Group itself. To celebrate the fact, the editorial team has produced a bumper issue of its bulletin, reflecting much of the history of the Group. Articles on the early years and conservation in Suffolk join some prophecies for the future, as well as records from the latter part of 1993. This must be one of the most impressive county society 'bulletins'. Further details from Stuart Ling, 76 The Street, Bramford, Ipswich, Suffolk IP8 4EB.

Zeiss centenary

The optical company *Carl Zeiss*—sponsor for the past 12 years of the British Birds Rarities Committee—is currently celebrating its centenary. *Carl Zeiss* has recently launched its 'Night Owl' range of binoculars (7 × 45B, 8 × 56B and 10 × 56B), with the twilight brilliance and exceptional short-focus of the famed 7 × 42B combined with the sturdiness and reliability of the birdwatchers' most popular 10 × 40B.

We send our congratulations to *Carl Zeiss*, together with the wish that the BBRC's sponsor is as successful in its second 100 years as in its first. The change in styles is demonstrated below.



93. One of the first-ever *Zeiss* binoculars alongside today's *Zeiss* Dialyt 7 × 45B, launched in celebration of the company's centenary (*Carl Zeiss*)

Changes in BOU Records Committee

Dr Alan Knox has retired as Chairman of the BOU Records Committee on completion of his four-year term of office.

His position as Chairman has been taken by Dr David Parkin of Nottingham University. David has been on the Committee for six years and will serve as Chairman for the next four. David is well known in birding circles and was, until recently, a Trustee of Fair Isle Bird Observatory. He is a professional geneticist, working almost exclusively on birds. He has been in the forefront of recent DNA work and was involved in the DNA identification of the 'Tyne Petrels'.

Alan Knox has been reappointed as an ordinary member of the Records Committee. The other current members of the BOURC are Tim Inskipp (Secretary), Ian Dawson, Rob Hume, John Marchant, Tony Marr, Richard Porter, Ken Shaw and Keith Vinicombe.

Bog Day II

This day will be marked by the Wildlife Trusts on 31st July, to highlight the continuing plight of Britain's peat bogs and the role that gardeners have in saving them. The campaign to save the remaining 4% of Britain's peat bogs has now run for four years, with many gardeners switching to peat-free garden products. Those of you who haven't, think about it seriously. Peat destruction has dire consequences for some of our birds, and for ecology in general.

Au revoir 'American Birds'

That institution, *American Birds*, the thick, glossy magazine that developed from *Audubon Field Notes* and the earlier *Bird Lore*, and which has thudded through letterboxes for the past 23 years, came to an end with the spring 1994 issue.

The regular Regional Reports and Christmas Bird Count issue (the size of a telephone directory) will still be published, but the National Audubon Society found that it was not financially viable in these tough economic times to continue with four colour-filled issues per year.

Editor Susan Roney Drennan hopes 'that in the not-too-distant future, like a Phoenix, a reincarnated *American Birds* will rise again.' So do we.

ID index

Black-faced Bunting: where was that identification paper? Are there any other photos in *BB*? Pechora Pipit: where are there any photos, and is there an identification paper in *BB*? All these questions and many, many more can be answered quickly and efficiently with a new index of *British Birds* covering 1981-93 (vols 74-86 inclusive) compiled by Graham Catley. The index is not comprehensive, but concentrates on useful identification notes, papers, articles and updates, and photographs which illustrate interesting and useful points. Species are listed in species order with reference to colour photo, identification, British and European status, etc., then the volume, issue and page numbers.

Copies of the 12-page index are available at the address below for £3.00 (including p&p). Alternatively, anyone with access to an ASCII or Wordperfect handling system can send a DD disk for copying at £2.50. The index will be updated annually so the disk option will enable updates to be carried out easily.

Similar concise indexes for some other journals and magazines are also available on request. Write to Graham P. Catley, 13 West Acridge, Barton-on-Humber, South Humberside DN18 5AJ; tel. 0652-634752.

European Nuthatch

The use of 'European Nuthatch' as the formal English name for *Sitta europaea* has now been adopted in *British Birds* (in place of 'Wood Nuthatch'). Although it does occur outside Europe, this is Europe's commonest nuthatch, and the name European Nuthatch is also especially appropriate because of its specific scientific name, *europaea*.

Bursaries for bird projects

Applications are invited by The Eric Hosking Charitable Trust for any worthwhile project involving writing, photography, painting or illustrating in relation to birds and other natural history subjects, anywhere in the world, during 1995. One or more bursaries of up to £500 are available. The closing date for applications is 30th September 1994.

Full details can be obtained by forwarding a SAE to: The Eric Hosking Charitable Trust, Pages Green House, Wetheringsett, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 5QA.

Eric Hosking's photos on view

A major retrospective Exhibition of Eric Hosking's Vintage Photographs will be open from 21st June to 21st August 1994 at the Courtyard Gallery, Pensthorpe Waterfowl Trust, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 0LN.

New Recorders

Owen Mitchell, 21 Trundle View Close, Barnham, Bognor Regis, West Sussex PO22 0JZ, has taken over from Tim Parmenter as Recorder for East and West Sussex.

Allan Burnett, Scotston Cottage, Kinnaird Estate, Brechin, Angus DD9 6TY, has taken over from Martin Scott as Recorder for Tayside (Angus, City of Dundee).

Steven J. Moon, Recorder for Mid Glamorgan, Kenfig National Nature Reserve, Ton Kenfig, Pyle, Mid Glamorgan CF33 4PT, has taken over from Phil Bristow as Recorder for South Glamorgan. Mid and South Glamorgan will now be treated as a single recording unit.

'Bird Watching' highlights

The July issue of the monthly magazine *Bird Watching* includes a photo-feature on birds' bills, what they are used for, and how they have developed; David Tomlinson reviews the various 60-mm 'spotting scopes' currently available; where to see birds in Greater Manchester and at Bempton Cliffs RSPB reserve; the best sites to see raptors and Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*; and Chris Mead reveals some startling ringing facts about Common Kingfishers *Alcedo atthis*.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—Northern Ireland

Tim Cleeves—Northeast

Frank Hamilton—Scotland

Barrie Harding—East Anglia

Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Alan Richards—Midlands

John Ryan—Southwest

Don Taylor—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

John Wilson—Northwest

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'



Monthly marathon



The sixth 'Monthly marathon' was won by Paul Archer (*Brit. Birds* 87: 305).

The closing date for the first three hurdles of the seventh marathon (plates 60, 72 and 80, in the April, May and June issues) is 15th July 1994, so the answers will be given next month.

The fourth hurdle appears as plate 94 on page 350.

The winner of 'Monthly marathon' can choose a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, Asia or North America.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.

94. Seventh 'Monthly marathon', fourth stage: photo no. 97. Identify the species. Read the rules on pages 25-26 of the January 1993 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th August 1994



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 16th May to 19th June 1994

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* St Catherine's Point (Isle of Wight), 2nd May.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* Near Byfleet (Surrey), 18th June.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* Coatham Marsh, Redcar (Cleveland), 4th-7th June.

Corn Crane *Crex crex* Decline continuing, with just one reported in Northern Ireland (formerly abundant) and only five singing on Tory Island (Co. Donegal), where there were nine in 1993.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* Lough Beg (Co. Londonderry), 21st-26th May; two, Akeragh Lough (Co. Kerry), 16th June; Kilcoole (Co. Wicklow), 17th June.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* Fairburn Ings (North Yorkshire), 3rd June; Foulney Island (Cumbria), 3rd-6th June.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* Male still present from 1993 on Aranmore (Co. Donegal), to mid June at least.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* Aldeburgh (Suffolk), 28th May; Rame (Cornwall), 29th May.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Kergord (Shetland), 23rd-29th May.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* Beachy Head (East Sussex), 5th June.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Felixstowe (Suffolk), 22nd May; St Margaret's Bay (Kent), 31st May.

Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* Great Saltee (Co. Wexford), 24th May (second spring record for Ireland).

Bonelli's Warbler *P. bonelli* St Agnes (Scilly), 18th May; Copinsay (Orkney), 25th May.

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* St Kilda (Western Isles), 21st May.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* Spurn (Humberside), 4th June; Winterton (Norfolk), 7th June; Portland (Dorset), 8th June; Beachy Head, 11th-13th June; Sennen (Cornwall), 19th June.



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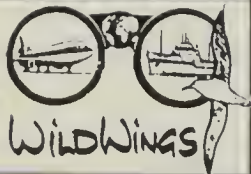
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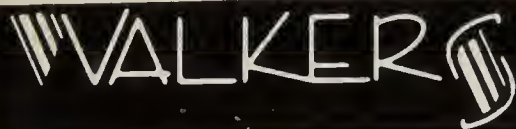
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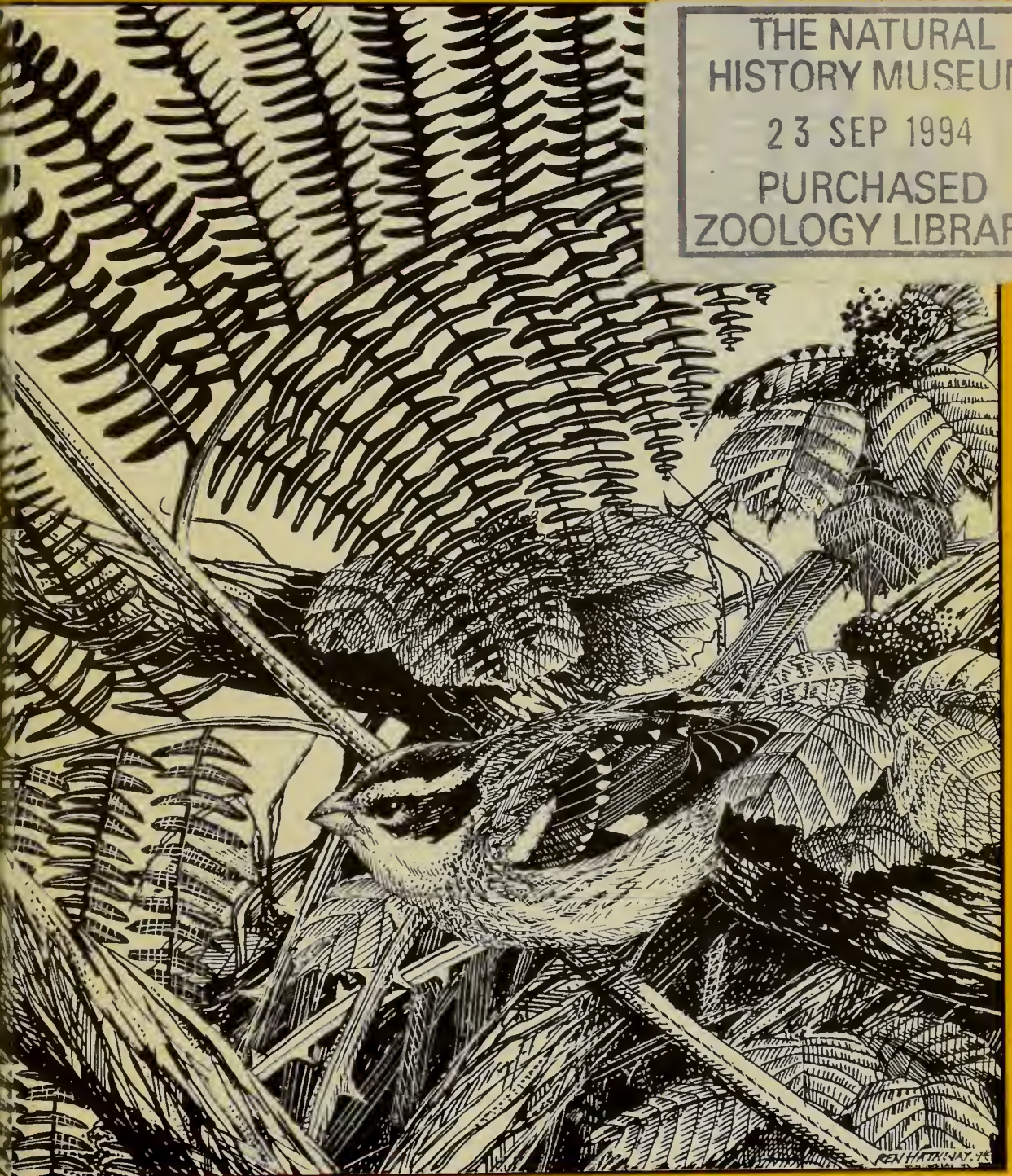
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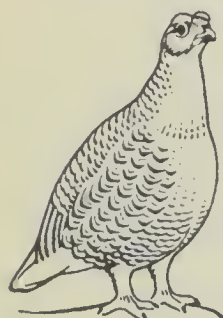
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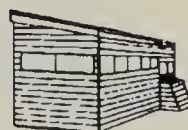
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The number of entrants this year was slightly lower than previously and the standard of the entries more variable. The short list of nine was, however, up to the high standard we have come to expect, and it was as difficult as ever to sort out the final placings. The winners were as follows:

BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1994

1st Ren Hathway (Isles of Scilly)

2nd Dan Powell (Fareham, Hampshire)

3rd Tim Worfolk (Bristol, Avon)

Chris Orgill (Lenton Abbey, Nottingham), Richard Allen (Fingringhoe, Essex) and Ernest Leahy (Redbourn, Herts) were placed fourth, fifth and sixth respectively. The short-list also included George B. Brown (Essex), Richard Johnson (Tyne & Wear) and Anthony Smith (Merseyside).

We should like to receive many more entries from artists aged 21 or under for the award set up in memory of Richard Richardson, the Norfolk bird-artist. This year's winner, who came second last year, was:

THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD, 1994

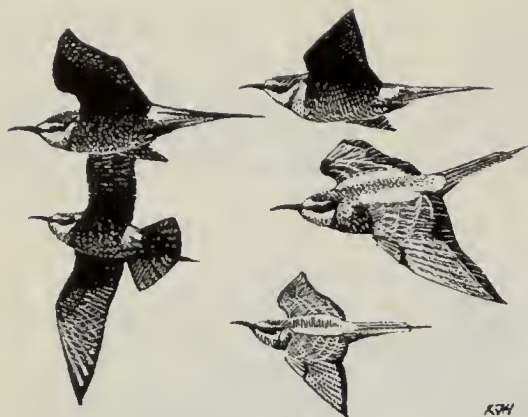
1st Max Andrews (Bath, Avon)

For the PJC Award, set up by David Cook in memory of his wife Pauline, the judges may select one drawing which particularly catches their attention for some outstanding quality. We were particularly attracted by one batch of drawings, clearly based directly on material in the artist's sketchbook. We chose one of these for:

THE PJC AWARD

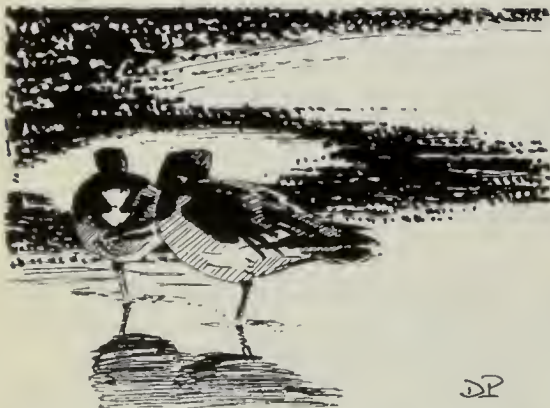
1st James McCallum (Wells, Norfolk)

Four other artists had individual drawings which we put on one side to consider for this award: Chris Orgill, Anthony Smith, John M. Walters (Devon) and Tom Willey (Devon).

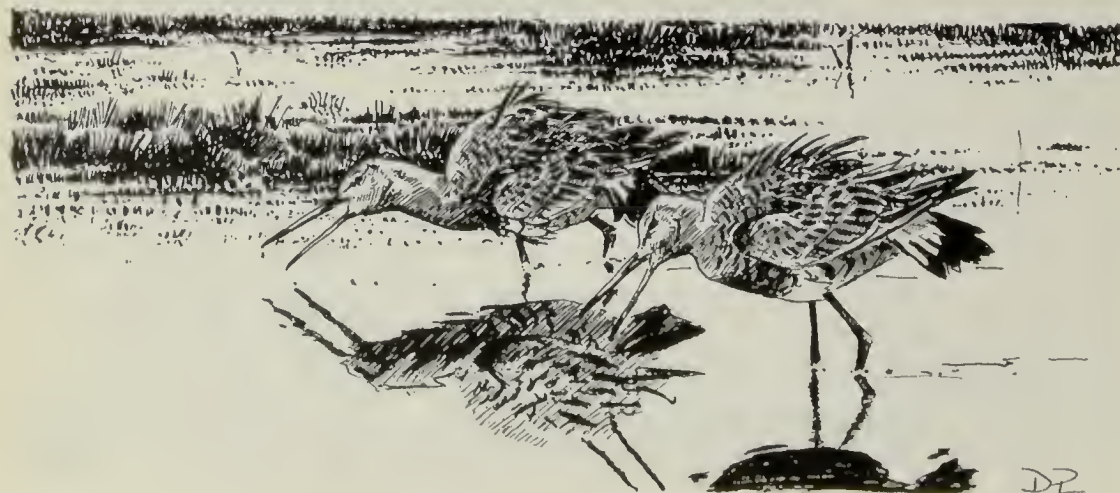


BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner:
European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster*
(Ren Hathway)

BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner:
Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* on Tresco,
October 1993 (Ren Hathway)



Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* at rest, Hill
Head (Dan Powell)

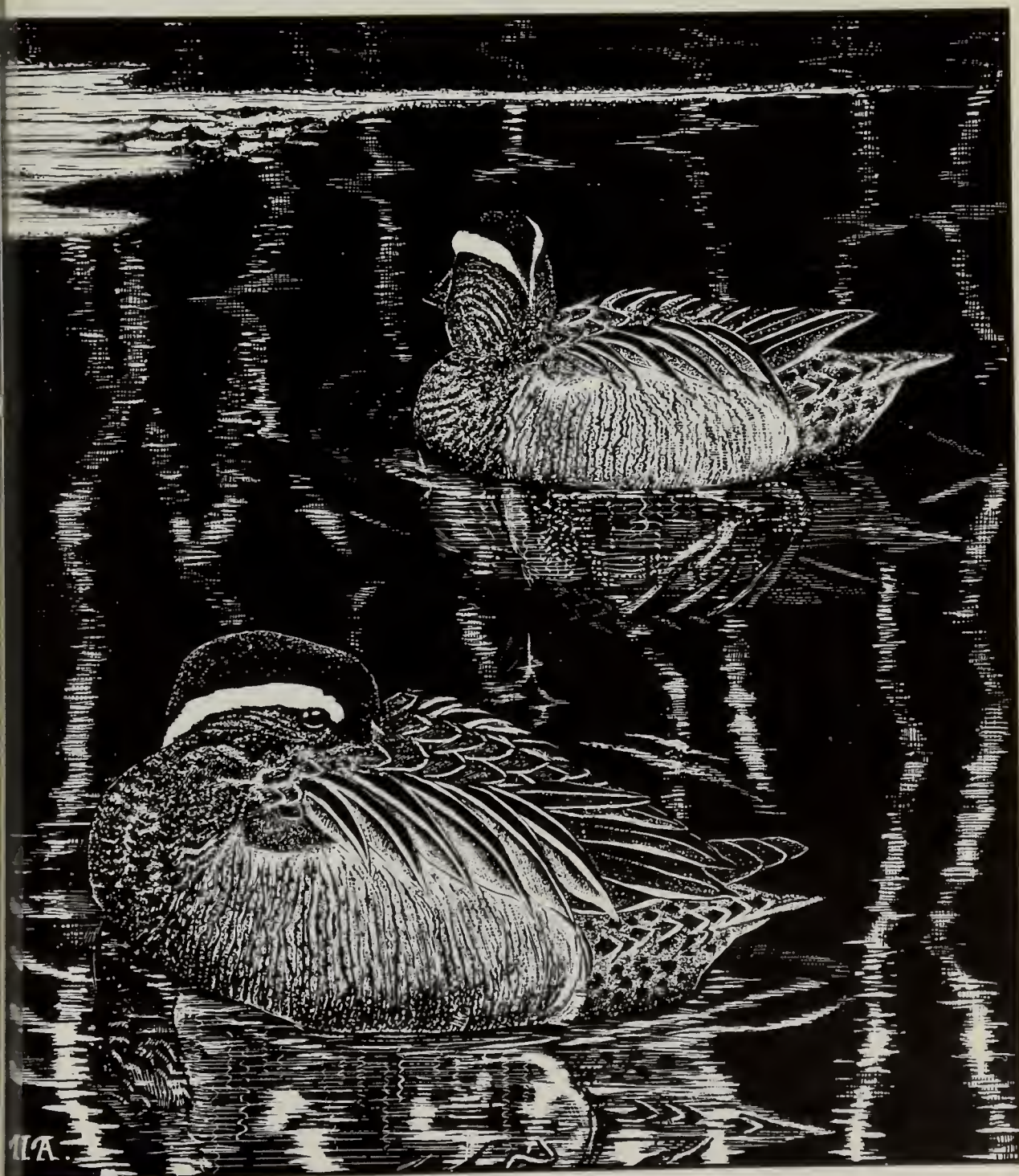


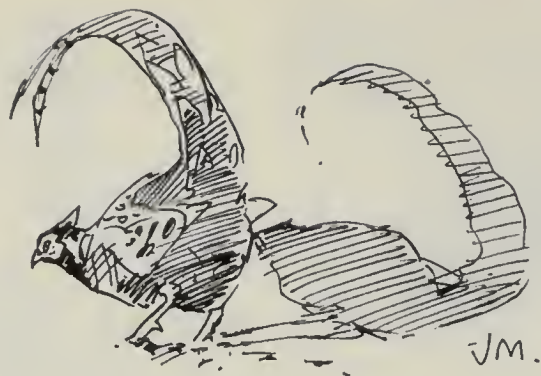
Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* threat display
(Dan Powell)



Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* (Tim
Worfolk)

RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD winner:
Garganeys *Anas querquedula*, Herriot's Bridge,
Chew Valley Lake (Max Andrews)





PJC AWARD winner: cock Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* in gust of wind, Holkham (James McCallum)

Ren Hathway—winner of this year's main award, after having been placed third last year—had produced four drawings of a uniformly excellent standard with an ornithologist's appreciation of the jizz of his birds and a lively drawing technique. Second, for the second year running, was Dan Powell, whose excellent work is very familiar to the judges for its energetic pen work and composition. The artist placed third, Tim Worfolk, impressed immediately, despite one drawing not being so strong as the rest.

Many of the drawings will be used on, or within, the covers of *BB* during the next 12 months.

Nearly all the artists who submitted work this year will have one or more drawings exhibited at the *BB*/BIY display within the Society of Wildlife Artists Exhibition at The Mall Galleries in London during 28th July to 12th August 1994. They will also be on view at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water during 19th-21st August.

We are extremely grateful to *Kowa* telescopes for their continued sponsorship of this competition and for providing the winners with such splendid prizes.

ROBERT GILLMOR, ALAN HARRIS, KEITH SHACKLETON and
J. T. R. SHARROCK

Second Conference of European Rarities Committees

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A meeting, organised by Christine & Peter Barthel of the journal *Limicola* and sponsored by *Carl Zeiss*, was held on Heligoland, Germany, during 2nd-9th October 1993. Thirty-two delegates of rarities committees attended, representing 19 European countries and the USA (see plate 95).

Association of European Rarities Committees

It was agreed to form an Association of European Rarities Committees with the aims of (1) encouraging the formation of a national rarities committee in every European country, (2) providing help for national committees when requested to do so, (3) preparing and maintaining a European List, and (4) organising meetings of delegates of the national committees at approximately two-year intervals to maintain personal contact, information exchange and co-operation. The guidelines passed on Texel in 1991 (see *Brit. Birds* 86: 301-302) were endorsed by the meeting.

For the next two years, Christine Barthel agreed to co-ordinate the activities of the AERC. So the contact address of the AERC until the next meeting is *Limicola*, Über dem Salzgraben 11, D-37574 Einbeck-Drüber, Germany.



95. Second Conference of European Rarities Committees, Heligoland, Germany, October 1993. Left to right: Philippe J. Dubois (France), Tim Sharrock (UK), Paul Mosimann (behind) (Switzerland), Urban Olsson (Sweden), Mare Duquet (France), Alan Knox (UK), Eduardo de Juana (Spain), Lasse Laine (Finland), Paul van Sanden (Belgium—Flanders), Walter Mergen (Germany), Peter Barthel (Germany), Jan Lontkowski (Poland), Mario Camiei (behind) (Switzerland), Attila Bankovics (Hungary), Agris Celmins (Latvia), Mikal Skakuj (behind) (Poland), René-Marie Lafontaine (Belgium—Wallonia), Tadeusz Stawarczyk (Poland), Claudia Wilds (USA), Gunnlaugar Pétursson (Iceland), Jozef Chytil (Czech Republic), Paul Herroelen (Belgium—Flanders), Andreas Ranner (Austria), Christine Barthel (behind) (Germany), Cecília Bosman (Netherlands), Andrej Sovine (Slovenia), Christian Cederroth (Sweden) and Tom Conzcmius (Luxembourg). Participants missing on photo: Frank Stühmer (Germany—Heligoland), Wim Wiegant (Netherlands), Rune Bosy (Norway), Arnoud van den Berg (Netherlands) (*Arnoud B. van den Berg*)

European Bird Report

The idea of publishing an annual European Bird Report was discussed. Until such time as this became practicable, the six-monthly feature 'European news' in *British Birds* was adopted for the purpose of information exchange; a free copy of each issue containing 'European news' would be supplied to each national rarities committee.

Reference list of published reports

Tadeusz Stawarczyk offered to compile a list of all published national rarities committees' reports with full journal references.

European List

It was agreed to compile a definitive and official list of European bird species. Christian Cederroth undertook to prepare a draft list based on information supplied by each national rarities committee for consideration at the next meeting, in 1995.

Categories

The following categories were accepted for the European List and recommended for use in national lists:

A – species which have been recorded in an apparently wild state at least once since 1st January 1950.

B – species which have been recorded in an apparently wild state only during 1800 to 1949.

C – released or escaped species which have established a self-supporting breeding population.

D – species which cannot be accepted for any of the categories A, B or C (for whatever reason, e.g. possible escape).

The official European List will comprise categories A, B and C; category D will form an appendix. For national lists, vagrants coming from a category C population of another country should be placed in category C rather than in A; if the origin is not clear, they should be placed in category D.

Taxonomy and sequence

It was agreed that the new European List, as well as national lists and annual reports, should continue to follow the Voous sequence and scientific nomenclature (*List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species*, 1977), but with some deviations in scientific names, splits and lumps, which would be standardised in the new European List after the 1995 meeting.

Number of records and individuals in reports

The annual reports of most countries give the number of previous records or the number of individuals for each species. It was recommended that both figures should be given (e.g. 4/5: four records with five individuals; or 4/1: four records of the same individual in different years). The second number after the oblique is perhaps not necessary if both figures are identical (e.g. 4 rather than 4/4).

In some countries, the numbers refer solely to the number of records accepted by the committee and do not include those seen before the committee began to work; in other countries, previous records are given separately. An explanation should always be given in the summary.

Standardisation of record forms

It was agreed that there was no need to standardise the record forms within Europe (they are already mostly very similar), but each committee would send copies of its record form, and the list of species which have to be reported, to each of the other committees.

Computerising data

Wim Wiegant explained the value of establishing a computerised database of rarity records. Many countries already do this, so it is too late for standardisation, but systems are often compatible, and exchange possibilities would be investigated.

Records from Turkey

Following a request from Max Kasperek of Germany and the Ornithological Society of the Middle East, it was agreed that—until such time as a Turkish Rarities Committee is formed—the national committee of the observers' country of origin would be willing to assess relevant Turkish rarity records.

The escape problem

The problem of escaped and released cage-birds had become even greater during the last five years than it had been before. Although in most countries the data about the bird trade are still very poor, some information from Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Poland was given that might lead to the hopeless conclusion that nearly every species is kept in cages and therefore might escape at any time of the year, but especially during migration periods. The origins of cage-birds and the selection of species change from time to time. Information collected in Germany shows that big loads come from Russia via Eastern Europe by road, and an increasing number is nowadays imported from China by air. Years ago, a lot of birds were shipped from India (especially buntings *Emberiza*), and also from Africa (including wheatears *Oenanthe* from North Africa), but these sources seem to be less important now. At the moment, Pakistan is well represented on the market (e.g. with accentors *Prunella*), and South America is back not only with parakeets, but also with many waders, including Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*. Vast numbers of birds that are trapped in autumn in China arrive via Hong Kong in Europe within one week (i.e. during migration, in September/October, when vagrants may be expected to occur naturally). The bird dealers receive their loads in 'mixed boxes' that include species that might be illegal in their country (e.g. in Germany all European breeding birds, such as Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*) or for some reason just hard to sell (buntings are out of fashion at the moment). In such cases, the birds are often released.

In Germany alone, about 25,000 raptors are kept legally (plus an unknown

number kept illegally) of which approximately 10% (i.e. 2,500) escape per year. As hybrids do not have to be registered, the number of falcon-hybrids (all falcon species can be hybridised, even dissimilar species such as Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* and Merlin *F. columbarius*) bred and kept by falconers has rapidly increased. The view was expressed that nearly all large falcons resembling Gyr or Saker *F. cherrug* need to be examined in the hand to be acceptable to a rarities committee, and that sometimes only DNA testing would establish their true identity.

Examples from the Netherlands show that dealers who keep 30,000 East Palearctic birds in their aviaries are not rare. Some released birds are reported to stay near the cages for some time, being attracted by the calls of their compatriots. Belgium is possibly the 'worst' country at the moment, as many of the cage-birds are imported via Antwerp and distributed by Belgian dealers to the other European countries. The Netherlands, Germany and Britain are also major importers. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of birds are involved each year, and this is all legal. Illegal imports (e.g. Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus*) reach Central Europe in small numbers via Poland and the Czech Republic.

Many national rarities committees have already cancelled a number of species from their national lists, transferred them from category A to category D, or have not placed them on their lists from the beginning. Other national lists still include a number of possible or likely escapes, mainly because of a lack of information about the cage-bird market in their own and other European countries.

It was recommended that every rarities committee should continue or begin to monitor the market in its own country. This is not possible by visiting the pet-shop around the corner. Magazines of the cage-bird community (often having ten times as many subscribers as the birding magazines) are a great help. Paul Herroelen has collected information from Belgium, and further research is being done at the moment in Britain, the Netherlands and Germany. Results will be collated in a paper for use by all committees and possible publication.

It was recommended that all Holarctic escapes should be included with full data in an appendix to the rarities reports of each country.

The subject will be discussed again at the next meeting.

Eastern Chiffchaffs

Several rarities committees asked for the criteria necessary to accept Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* of the subspecies *tristis* from Central and Northeastern Siberia (including *fulvescens* from Eastern Ural to Yenisey). Urban Olsson made clear that many Chiffchaffs from Eastern Europe appear to show many or all of the characters of *tristis*, so examination in the hand is essential. The criteria given by Tiechurst (1938) and Svensson (1992) should be followed. It was considered likely that 'real' *tristis* is extremely rare in Europe, even more so than, for example, Pallas's Leaf Warbler *P. proregulus*. It was agreed that every committee should include in-the-hand *tristis* in the list of subspecies which have to be reported, for a trial period of the next two years.

Next meeting

Offers to host the next meeting came from France, Great Britain and Hungary. To encourage participation from Eastern European countries, the invitation from Attila Bankovics for the meeting to be held in Hungary was accepted unanimously. It was decided to meet in Kecskemét, Hungary, in August 1995.

Sponsor

The meeting on Heligoland was kindly sponsored by *Carl Zeiss Germany*. Walter W. Mergen, representative of *Zeiss*, announced that *Zeiss* would probably be able to offer financial help for the meeting in Hungary.

References

- SVENSSON, L. 1992 *Identification Guide to European Passerines*. 4th edn. Stockholm.
TICEHURST, C. B. 1938. *A Systematic Review of the Genus Phylloscopus*. London.

[This summary is based on two sets of much longer notes on the meeting, prepared by Christine Barthel, and by Dr Alan Knox & Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.]

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The Carl Zeiss Award

Sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee, *Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd*, has announced two bonuses for the lucky person winning the Carl Zeiss Award from this year onwards.

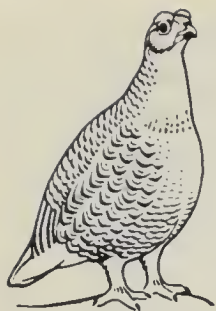
First, the prize of a pair of *Zeiss* binoculars is now the winner's choice of 10 × 40 BGAT or 7 × 42 BGAT, as in the past, or the new 'Night Owl' 7 × 45B.

Secondly, the presentation will take place at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water in mid August, and the winner's travelling expenses will be paid by *Zeiss* so that he or she can attend the Fair.

The Carl Zeiss Award is presented annually to the person who supplies the most helpful, interesting and instructive photograph of a rarity taken in Britain and examined by the BBRC during a record circulation.

The two previous winners of the Award were Bob Proctor for his photographs of a Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* mist-netted on Unst, Shetland, in September 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 622, plates 230 & 231) and Ren Hathway for his photograph of the 1992 Cape Cornwall Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* of the race *pallidirostris* in flight (*Brit. Birds* 86: 565-566, plate 196).

This year's winner will be announced next month.



Reviews

Wildwatch Information System, version 2, with UKMap. 3.5-in. or 5.25-in. computer disc, 44-p. manual. Computer Concepts (Northern), South Shields, 1994. £79.00.

Input your bird records with date, place, grid reference, numbers, etc., and output them as sorted lists or as dots on custom-drawn maps. The map-drawing facility of this DOS-based program is very basic, but you can import scanned images, provided you have access to a scanner. Even so, the results are not impressive. The linked UKMap plots your records on an outline of Britain, and you can zoom to a single 100-km square overlaid with a 10-km grid, though the provided outline is very crude—I could barely recognise Islay or adjacent islands when I zoomed to its 100-km square—and there are no county boundaries. A second map shows counties, but with no zoom facility. Although UKMap plots records input into WildWatch, you cannot access it directly, but have to exit the latter and load UKMap separately. The maps from both programs can be printed, but much detail is lost without a colour printer.

There is the basis of a good idea here, but it needs further development to become really useful. Although minimum requirements are an 8086 computer with 512K memory, I found the map-drawing slow even on a 486SX.

MALCOLM OGILVIE

Checklist of Birds of the Afrotropical and Malagasy Regions. vol. 1: Species limits and distribution. By R. J. Dowsett & A. D. Forbes-Watson. Tauraco Press, Liège, 1993. 374 pages. ISBN 2-87225-000-X. £15.00.

A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds. Tauraco Research Report no. 5. Edited by R. J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire. Tauraco Press, Liège, 1993. 389 pages. ISBN 2-87225-010-X. £15.00.

The senior author, as productive in desktop publishing as in field ornithology, has been troubled as to how best to present these scholarly reviews and compendious tabulations. Books or papers? How many? The awaited volume 2 of the *Checklist*, by Dowsett, promises a full synonymy of all species and races. Volume 1, and the *Contribution* (itself two distinct works), seem to be offered to the same readership as companion works—one even refers to the other as ‘accompanying’—yet they differ in size and binding, and overlap very considerably in content. Following a list of 2,176 species with scientific, English and French names, and locations in works such as *The Birds of Africa*, the bulk of the *Checklist* is a huge table showing the status of each bird species in 48 countries and islands; 350 literature references and bilingual indexes complete the book.

Part 1 of the *Contribution* is *Afrotropical Avifaunas: annotated country checklists* by Dowsett in 322 pages, an authoritative country-by-country checklist, with comprehensive documentation of status. Part 2 is *Comments on the Taxonomy of some Afrotropical Bird Species* by Dowsett and F. Dowsett-Lemaire in 67 pages; it discusses taxonomic changes adopted in the *Checklist* and contains many sonagrams. Discussion is valuable, but in places dogmatic; for instance, claims that ‘We have shown that *Batis capensis* and *B. mixta* are not conspecific . . . and that *reichenowi* ought to be treated as a form of *B. capensis*’ are not supported by the self-citations given.

Academics will value both books. Inveterate Africa birders will need them, too; but not in the rucksack.

C. H. FRY

Atlas der Brutvögel Österreichs. Edited by Michael Dvorak, Andreas Ranner & Hans-Martin Berg. Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Vogelkunde, Wien, 1993. 527 pages; 15 colour plates; over 200 distribution maps. ISBN 3-85457-121-6. AS190.

Atlas der Brutvögel Ostdeutschlands: Mecklenburg/Vorpommern, Brandenburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, Thüringen. Compiled by Bernd Nicolai. Gustav Fischer Verlag Jena, Stuttgart, 1993. 314 pages; over 200 distribution maps. ISBN 3-334-60440-3. Paperback DM48.

Atlas der Verbreitung und Häufigkeit der Brutvögel Deutschlands. By Goetz Rheinwald. Dachverband Deutscher Avifaunisten, Berlin, 1993. 264 pages; 236 distribution maps. Paperback DM25.

These three books are the breeding-bird atlases of, respectively, Austria, the eastern part of Germany (the former GDR) and the whole of Germany (the former FRG and GDR combined). All three are wholly in German, except that the Austrian and German atlases include English bird names, and the Austrian and East German atlases both have exceedingly useful one-page summaries in English. All three were published almost simultaneously, in 1993, but relate to work carried out during, respectively, 1981-85, 1978-82 and 1980-85. Those for Austria and East Germany both follow the standard recommended criteria established by the European Ornithological Atlas Committee (three grades of breeding evidence, 'possible', 'probable' and 'confirmed'). The Austrian maps show the three categories by open, shaded and filled circles in green on a black map outline, while that for East Germany uses the standard three different sizes of dot (black on a black map outline). The third atlas, covering the whole of Germany, differs from the other two in giving quantitative results: there are five sizes of dot (blue on a black outline), indicating the number of pairs within the recording unit (1-10, 10-100, and so on up to 10,000-100,000). The East German atlas includes quantitative maps for 20 species, using different scales of abundance for each, as appropriate.

Of the three publications, that for Austria is the most lavish, in hardback format with a double-page spread for each species; the two German volumes are both in softback, with one page per species. The Austrian atlas has four coloured transparent overlays, and the quantitative German atlas has seven monochrome transparent overlays showing climatic and topographical features.

Apart from the first two being qualitative and the third quantitative, the main difference between the three atlases lies in the size of the grid. The Austrian atlas uses a very fine grid, each recording unit measuring 34.7 km²; that for East Germany is intermediate, at 126 km²; and that for the whole of Germany is the coarsest (625 km²). Thus, the grid for East Germany is roughly the same as that used in our own breeding and wintering atlases, that for Austria shows the distribution almost three times more precisely, whereas that for the whole of Germany is six times coarser.

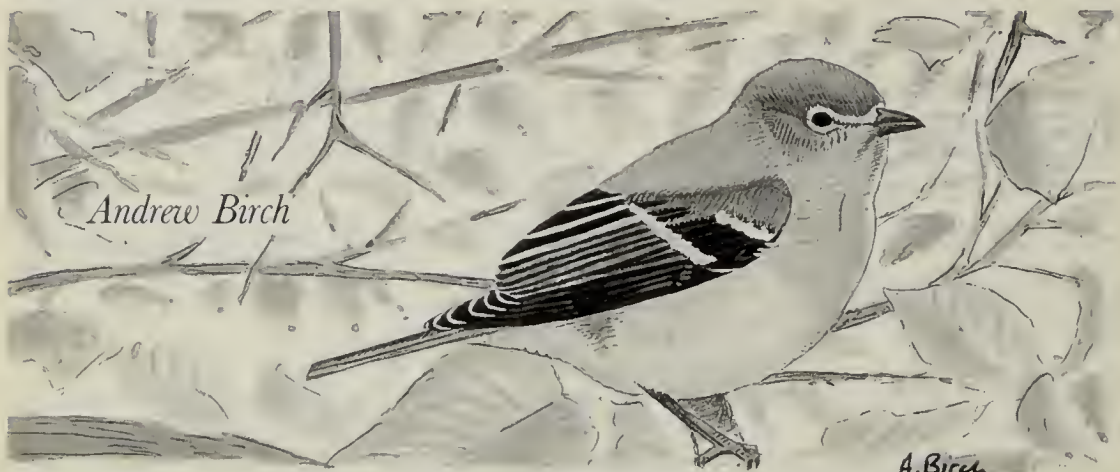
The two most widespread species in Austria proved to be Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (found in 81% of squares) and Blackbird *Turdus merula* (76%), closely followed by Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* and Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (both 75%). The top three in East Germany were Chaffinch (99.9%), House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (99.8%) and Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* (99.7%). Over the whole of Germany, the commonest species was estimated to be Chaffinch (10.9 million breeding pairs), followed by Great Tit *Parus major* (10.4 million) and Blackbird (8.5 million).

Unlike most national and regional atlases, none of these three includes decorative bird illustrations, although the Austrian atlas includes some fine habitat photographs. British birders will, however, be turning with interest to the maps of species such as Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*, Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus* and other local 'specialities'.

These three volumes are complementary, and anyone interested in the breeding distributions of birds in central Europe will undoubtedly wish to purchase all three, which provide a fitting testimony to the dedicated labours of hundreds of voluntary fieldworkers. J. T. R. SHARROCK

[We have been informed that a 100-page English version of the Austrian breeding-bird atlas (Dvorak, Ranner & Berg, 1993) is in preparation for publication in autumn 1994. EDS]

Yellow-throated Vireo: new to Britain and Ireland



I was birding in Kenidjack valley, north of St Just, Cornwall, during the morning of 20th September 1990. I had watched the area regularly during the previous seven years. Mentally, I tossed a coin and decided to check the bushes at the bottom of the valley just one more time. This paid off.

The valley seemed very quiet, but, at the last bush, around 09.00 GMT, I noticed a movement at the back and focused on the wings of what I thought could be a Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*. When it flitted around to the front of the bush, however, it showed a gleaming yellow throat. It proceeded to flycatch in the open. I was so excited and shaking that I had to sit down and study the bird with my telescope.

I quickly ruled out the American wood-warblers *Dendroica* already on the British List, as I was impressed by the remarkable yellow throat and face, unstreaked, bright green upperparts, broad white wing-bars and the heavyish blue-grey bill and legs. After making mental notes I rushed back to the house to consult the *National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (1983). To my surprise, none of the wood-warblers seemed to fit. Only two, the Pine Warbler *D. pinus* and the Cerulean Warbler *D. cerulea*, seemed even remotely close. I tried unsuccessfully to phone several local people, but eventually succeeded in speaking to Richard Millington and described the bird to him. He telephoned some other people to try to confirm the sighting.

In the meantime, I went back for another look and, after 45 minutes' searching, I had brief, but good, views. I was reminded of Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*, by the jizz and the bluish bill and legs. Quickly turning my mind to vireos, I realised that it was, of course, a Yellow-throated Vireo *V. flavifrons*, a first for the Western Palearctic.

I left a friend, R. Ingham, at the site while I went back to the telephone. The first local birders arrived about midday, when the vireo was not showing. After an agonising two-hour wait, it reappeared and showed well to the few of us present that evening. Although quite elusive, the bird was seen by many

96-101. Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons*, Cornwall, September 1990 (facing page: top & centre, *Avian Photos/Dave Coltridger*; bottom, *Avian Photos/Tim Loschy*; overleaf: top, *Jack Levene*; centre and bottom, *Mike K. Watson*)





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hundreds of people during the weekend, was photographed (*Brit. Birds* 84: plate 253; 87: plates 96-101), and stayed until 27th September.

Description

SIZE Roughly that of a Robin *Erithacus rubecula*. Quite sturdy and long-winged, with a medium-length, slightly notched tail and a thick bill.

PLUMAGE *Head* Forehead, crown and nape bright olive-green. Bright yellow eye-ring continued forward to the base of the upper mandible, giving a spectacled effect. Thin green loreal stripe and slightly darker eyebrow above the yellow stripe in front of the eye. Ear-coverts washed-out green, merging into yellow throat. *Upperparts* Most of mantle bright olive-green; lower back, scapulars and rump uniform blue-grey. Tail blackish, with white

outer feathers. *Wings* Lesser coverts blue-grey, as scapulars; median coverts tipped white to form a clear wing-bar. Greater coverts also tipped white, forming a second, broad white bar. Inner greater coverts blue-grey. Tertiaries blackish, with clear white fringes. Secondaries blackish, with white fringes and a diffuse green wash. Alula and primary coverts black, with pale fringes. Primaries black, with clear white tips. *Underparts* Throat and breast bright daffodil-yellow, ending quite abruptly against white lower breast; belly and undertail-coverts silky white.

BARE PARTS Eyes black. Bill and legs blue-grey.

The vireo foraged rather sluggishly and deliberately in bushes and also in bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and knotweed *Polygonum*. When it found an insect, it would often fly up to a bush to eat it. It sometimes flew up to 200 m to a new feeding area and could be elusive, often sitting motionless for several minutes at a time.

Andrew Birch, 37 Blenheim Avenue, Highfield, Southampton, Hampshire SO2 1DW

Rob Hume, Chairman of the British Birds Rarities Committee, has commented: 'As well as the notes by the finder, Andrew Birch, a supporting description was also supplied by John F. Ryan, at the request of the Committee. The identification of this vireo was straightforward. That it was not a brain-taxing exercise for the identification pundits was made up for by the fact that it was such a superb bird.'

'Identification of vireos was discussed recently by BBRC member Colin Bradshaw (*Brit. Birds* 86: 651-653). Yellow-throated is one of three strongly patterned species, together with White-eyed Vireo *V. griseus* and Solitary Vireo *V. solitarius*. White-eyed has a white throat, while Solitary has a blue-grey head and white throat and breast, making the double white wing-bars combined with yellow throat and breast of Yellow-throated diagnostic. Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* is more slender, with a finer bill, softly streaked upperparts, quite different head pattern and narrower, longer white wing-bars more parallel with the edge of the closed wing.'

Dr Alan Knox, past Chairman of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, has commented as follows: 'Few records which the BOURC has seen recently have been as straightforward to assess as this one: the paperwork completed its postal circulation of the Committee in a little over one month. Excellent photographs and two good sets of notes left little doubt about the identification. The Committee was not aware of any Yellow-throated Vireos in captivity in Britain, and the species was added to category A of the British & Irish List (*Ibis* 134: 380).'

'There were no problems over the Yellow-throated Vireo, but, with apparently straightforward cases like this, it is important that standards should not be allowed to slip. Even with readily identifiable birds seen by hundreds of people, more than one observer should submit notes. In addition, photographs *on their own* are not usually acceptable. Whilst the BOURC would, under exceptional circumstances, consider records based on recently published descriptions, it is reluctant to do so. First-hand evidence is always preferable, if for no other reasons than that typographical errors may occur, photographs may inadvertently get switched, and an author's original meaning may quite innocently get changed by an editor improving the readability of an article. There is still a reluctance to accept single-observer sight records and, if only one set of notes is submitted or published, this is effectively what a record becomes. Several sets of original notes add greatly to the value of any record, as different observers will note different details. It is important to ensure that an adequate account of all major rarities exists in the files.' EDS



Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1991

Malcolm Ogilvie and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

This is the nineteenth annual Report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, and its publication signals the retirement, through ill-health, of Robert Spencer as Secretary of the Panel. Bob took over from Tim Sharrock in 1983. Tim was the first Secretary, and he and Bob have each compiled nine of these reports. In taking over as Secretary from Bob in January 1993, I should like to pay a personal tribute, coupled with that of the Panel, for his dedicated hard work in ensuring the smooth running of the Panel, maintaining excellent relations with the network of county bird recorders, species co-ordinators and other observers, and compiling a succession of informative and readable reports. I am also very grateful for the smoothness of the hand-over.

An article describing the history of the Panel, its purposes and its methods of working was published in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 117-122). One point of clarification is necessary following one or two concerns expressed since its publication. It has become apparent that it was insufficiently emphasised in the article that the original forms submitted to the Panel are *never* circulated around the Panel in the way that, for example, descriptions of rare birds are circulated around the British Birds Rarities Committee. The Secretary may very occasionally find it necessary to discuss an individual form with the Chairman, but only he sees the vast majority of the forms. We hope that this categorical assurance will set at rest the minds of those people who, understandably, wished to be reassured on this point.

During the early part of 1992, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee's commissioned research programmes in their Vertebrate Ecology and Conservation Branch were subject to external review. The JNCC provides the major funds in support of the Panel and it is extremely pleasing to report that the Science Review Group commented very favourably upon the work of the Panel and its relevance to conservation. The Group recommended that computerisation of the historic data held by the Panel should be proceeded with, as was mentioned in the article on the work of the Panel (*Brit. Birds* 85: 117-122). Considerable progress has already been made. Once computerisation of all the data is completed, it is intended to begin the process of sorting, checking and analysing the accumulated records.

It is obviously in the interests of the Panel, of observers and of potential users of the information that the Panel's annual report is published as quickly

as possible after the end of the year it deals with. The best that has ever been achieved in this respect has been publication some 13 or 14 months after the close of the year. Lately, however, the interval has stretched to two years or more, as will happen with this report. The Panel is seeking ways to speed up the process once the data have been received (computerisation being one of them), but, through the Secretary, will be appealing to county recorders for their co-operation in getting relevant records to the Panel within no more than nine months of the end of the year.

The Panel

The current (beginning of 1994) membership of the Panel consists of Dr L. A. Batten, Dr C. J. Bibby, Dr J. J. D. Greenwood, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Dr K. W. Smith, D. A. Stroud and Dr M. A. Ogilvie (Secretary). As already mentioned, Dr Ogilvie took over from R. Spencer at the beginning of 1993. Dr R. W. Summers resigned from the Panel in summer 1993 and his fellow Panel members would like to thank him for his valuable contribution during his period as a member. The individual members of the Panel serve in a personal capacity, but four of them are additionally able to reflect the interests and needs of the respective sponsoring bodies. The work of the Panel is commissioned by the JNCC, with further financial support coming from the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*.

The Panel collects records from the whole of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, but not from the Republic of Ireland. Coverage was particularly good in 1991, with records received, or nil returns, from every single county and region. There were a couple of instances where it was known that complete information had not been received for a county, but the omissions were not of major importance.

Review of the year 1991

Following a period of particularly severe weather in February, the spring and summer of 1991, well into July, were generally cooler than average, and often wetter, too, and many species of birds had a poor breeding season. The annual report of the British Trust for Ornithology's Nest Record Scheme (*BTO News* nos. 185 & 187) reported both that it was a late season, with many long-distance migrants being held back by poor weather in the Mediterranean and strong northerly winds over Europe, and that breeding success was below the long-term average for nearly half the 82 species analysed. The effects were widespread across the range of species.

Against this background, it will come as no surprise to learn that rare birds breeding in the United Kingdom in 1991 also had a hard time. At least 20 species with well-established breeding populations were reported in smaller numbers or as having a reduced breeding success or both compared with 1990, whereas only 16 species showed increases. The comparisons should be viewed with some caution because of possible differences in effort. Not only is poor weather not very encouraging to fieldworkers either, but pairs which fail are also less likely to be recorded than are successful pairs. The pattern is, however, remarkably similar to that shown by the Nest Record returns.

Migrants from the south were among the worst affected, including

Garganey *Anas querquedula*, which showed the first decline in the number of pairs for very many years. The number of sites where this species was seen actually went up slightly, so the long period of gradual increase of recent years looks set to continue in the future. Being a waterbird only compounded the problem, as also reported by the Nest Record Scheme, with high spring and early-summer water-levels flooding out nests. This was a problem for Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* in some localities. Although the number of sites where they appeared was the highest recorded, the total of pairs was the lowest for four years and rearing success was poor.

The general picture for birds of prey is one of continued well-being, but the poor breeding season of 1991 showed up in reduced production of young. This applied, for example, to Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, despite record numbers of pairs of both species commencing to nest. Breeding success of Hobby *Falco subbuteo* was also lower than usual, though the population continued to grow, if more slowly than before.

The warblers had more mixed fortunes, with Cetti's *Cettia cetti*, in particular, showing a substantial drop from 1990. This species is known to be susceptible to cold winters. Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* and Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, however, achieved minor gains, the latter especially welcome in showing increases in both number of sites and number of pairs to produce the highest totals for the last five and six years respectively. Although the totals for Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* for 1991 show considerable falls from those of 1990, the species has now become so successful that maintaining adequate coverage is becoming difficult without full-time fieldworkers. Fewer pairs were found in the main breeding area in the New Forest, but coverage was not sufficiently complete for any real comparisons to be made with 1990. A full census is scheduled for 1994.

Another success story of recent years continued into 1991, with Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* slowly spreading in range as well as increasing in numbers. Twenty years ago, the great majority of the 20-30 breeding pairs were in Scotland. Numbers in the northern haunts have actually declined slightly, but this loss has been more than made up by the colonisation of a number of quiet, lowland waters in the midland and eastern counties of England. Gravel-pits and reservoirs have increased enormously in numbers in these areas over the last 30-40 years, but, presumably because the grebes require extensive areas of emergent and floating aquatic vegetation, the necessary time for these to appear has to elapse before the grebes become interested.

The colonisation of Britain by the Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, almost entirely attributable to the sterling work of Roy Dennis and his associates in providing nest-boxes on a wide scale, has proved such a success story that it is becoming increasingly difficult to continue a full and accurate annual breeding census. This year's total of 72 confirmed pairs, therefore, though well below the 100 recorded in 1990, is not thought to represent a real decline of that magnitude. With hundreds of boxes now in place, the manpower needed to visit them all in the course of a season is now so great that it has reluctantly been concluded that in future it will be possible to monitor the boxes only in certain areas. To have gone from a single breeding pair in each of the years

1970 to 1972 to the present population of 100 confirmed pairs in 1990, and hundreds of young fledging every year, is no mean achievement. In addition, occasional breeding records are being received from elsewhere in Britain, so a wider geographical distribution should not be long in coming.

No new species bred in the United Kingdom in 1991, but there were some intriguing records of potential new or nearly new breeders, including Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, with a singing male turning up for the second year running, and the first indications of what became, in 1992 and 1993, the successful colonisation by Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* in northern England. Individuals of two different species, Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* and Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*, apparently formed hybrid pairs with congeners. The latter is the long-staying individual in Northumberland, but the former is a remarkable record, though having to remain as highly probable rather than absolutely certain. The virtually certain nesting by Little Gulls *Larus minutus* in Scotland was a pleasant surprise.

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We apologise for any inadvertent omissions.

Key to geographical regions used in this report

Northern Ireland Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Tyrone

England, SW Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Somerset, Wiltshire

England, SE Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Greater London, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex (East and West)

England, E Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire and South Humberside, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Suffolk

England, Central Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire (with Rutland), Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Worcestershire

England, N Cheshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, North Humberside, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire (North, South and West)

Wales All present-day counties (i.e. includes the former Monmouth)

Scotland, S The regions of Borders, Dumfries & Galloway, Lothian and part of Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Ayrshire, Berwickshire, Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Lanarkshire, Lothian (East, Mid and West), Peeblesshire, Renfrewshire, Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire, Wigtownshire

Scotland, Mid The regions of Central, Fife, Grampian and Tayside, together with parts of Highland and Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Aberdeenshire, Angus, Banffshire, Clackmannanshire, Dunbartonshire, Fife, Kincardineshire, Kinross, Moray, Nairn, Perthshire, Stirlingshire

Scotland, N & W Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles, together with the greater part of Highland and part of Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Argyllshire, Bute, Caithness, Inverness-shire, Ross & Cromarty, Sutherland

Systematic list

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Three localities in three counties; one pair built nest.

England, E One locality: one from 1st April to 11th August.

England, N One locality: one in breeding plumage in late June and July.

Scotland, S One locality: pair built three nests, but no eggs laid.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	3	2	2	1	1	5	10	8	6	5	3
No. individuals	2	2	3	1	4	5	9	12	9	3	4
No. pairs	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	3	3	2	1

There has still not been a successful breeding attempt in Britain and, if anything, this now looks less likely as numbers decline from the peak of three years ago. What may well be the same pair in southern Scotland has now built nests in each of the last three years, though a second Scottish site, where eggs have been laid in past years, seems to have been abandoned.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

31 localities: 61-74 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S One locality: pair on 26th April, single on 30th and 8th May.

Scotland, Mid Eight localities: (1)-(8) totals of 14 pairs and three singles summered; eight pairs reared 12 young.

Scotland, N & W 22 localities: (1)-(22) 53 breeding pairs and three singles; 52 young fledged.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	35	25	44	26	40	43	39	22	39	36	31
Confirmed (pairs)	52	51	41	39	63	68	33	31	70	74	61
Possible (pairs)	19	8	38	21	18	19	6	6	8	12	13
Max. total pairs	71	59	79	60	81	87	39	37	78	86	74

The RSPB Highland Office carried out a co-ordinated survey in Scotland, on which these results are based. A slight decline is evidenced from last year's record total, but perhaps as much due to inclement summer weather as to

human threats, which are nonetheless serious; see Crooke *et al.* (1993, *Britain's Birds in 1990-91*: 135-138). The population also remains vulnerable because some 40% occur on just three waters.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

25 localities in 12 counties: 19-53 pairs breeding.

England, SE Five localities: (1)(2) pairs displaying and nest-building in May; (3) displaying pair in May; (4) adult calling on 18th May, seen during 12th-19th July, joined by a second individual, reported as a 'juvenile' on 13th; (5) one on 18th May.

England, E Six localities: (1) pair on 14th May only, at site where breeding has occurred; (2)(3) pairs in April or May; (4)-(6) single adults for one to three weeks.

England, Central Two localities: (1) pair in breeding plumage from end of March to end of April, up to eight including one juvenile from end of July to end of August, but no sign of breeding; (2) adult in breeding plumage from 25th April to early August.

England, N Six localities: (1) four pairs each had two broods, rearing a minimum total of four young; (2) two pairs each reared two young, a third pair may have hatched one young; (3) 27 present 6th May, several nests built, but no young reared; (4)(5) total of up to six adults in May, possibly the same individuals visiting both sites; (6) immature on 7th October.

Scotland, S Three localities: (1)-(3) single adults present in May or June.

Scotland, Mid Three localities: (1) six pairs bred and six young fledged; (2) two pairs bred, both seen with young; (3) two pairs present.

1990 ERRATUM The distribution of localities between the English regions, as published in the 1990 Report, contained a number of errors. The true picture is as follows, the overall totals of localities and pairs remaining the same.

1990 England, SW One locality: pair in March.

1990 England, SE One locality: pair fledged three young.

1990 England, E Four localities: (1)-(4) one or two present in summer, but no evidence of breeding.

1990 England, Central Five localities: (1) four adults summered; (2)-(5) one or two present in summer, but no evidence of breeding.

1990 England, N Four localities: (1) 12 pairs reared 11 young; (2) five adults reared at least three young; (3) pair in May; (4) one on 29th April.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	7	13	19	17	17	15	19	22	19	19	25
Confirmed (pairs)	5	11	11	17	9	11	27	15	25	21	19
Possible (pairs)	7	12	21	13	13	22	12	20	15	16	34
Max. total pairs	12	23	32	30	22	33	39	35	40	37	53

Caution has to be applied to sightings in spring and late summer as passage birds can stay well into May and reappear in July. Even making allowances for this, the totals represent an encouraging increase in numbers of both localities and pairs. The increase was particularly marked in southeast and eastern England, after a poor year for those areas in 1990. Conversely, the successful breeding in southwest England in 1990 was not repeated.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*

One locality: one in spring and early summer.

Scotland, N & W One locality.

SHETLAND One locality: adult in gannetry, Hermaness, 23rd March to 13th April, then intermittently to 4th June.

1990 Scotland, N & W One locality: present 27th March to 7th April, 26th, 31st May, 10th June, in gannetry, Hermaness.

After an absence throughout 1988 and 1989, this lonely bird's return in 1990 failed to get a mention in the Report for that year.

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

13 localities: 19 booming males.

England, SW One locality: single booming male.

England, SE One locality: single booming male.

England, E Ten localities: (1)(2) single pairs bred; (3) two booming males, one pair bred; (4) three booming males; (5) two booming males; (6)-(10) single booming males.

England, N One locality: three booming males, at least one pair bred.



	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	16	15	18	18	15	12	17	14	14	12	13
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	0	5	0	0	1	2	3	3	4
Booming males	47	35	44	36	28	23	22	30	30	20	19

The status of this species remains of great concern, with numbers at the key sites falling again, though there was a welcome return to sites in southwest and southeast England.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

18 localities: 4-21 pairs breeding, of which four were feral.

England, SE One locality: up to three feral individuals all summer.

England, N One locality: feral pair bred, raising three young.

Scotland, S One locality: single, presumed injured, all summer.

Scotland, Mid Three localities: (1) two feral pairs raised four young; (2) pair bred, but eggs stolen in June, and one adult died in August; (3) single summered.

Scotland, N & W 12 localities: (1) three adults, with display noted from June to August, but no sign of nesting; (2)(3) four adults summered at each; (4)-(6) two adults summered at each; (7)-(12) singles summered, one with a yellow leg ring indicating Icelandic origin.

Only one pair of apparently wild individuals bred, compared with last year's three pairs, and the total number summering declined, too. The potential for nesting by feral individuals appears to be increasing, particularly in England, which is not necessarily to be welcomed bearing in mind the recent history of other escaped wildfowl.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

One locality: 0-1 pair breeding. See also comment below.

Scotland, N & W One locality: pair during 25th-26th May only, no evidence of breeding.

This species only very occasionally gets reported to the Panel, perhaps because summering 'pricked' individuals are relatively commonplace at the regular wintering haunts, especially in Scotland, while elsewhere in the country feral individuals, escaped from waterfowl collections or in some cases deliberately released by wildfowlers, are not thought worthy of reporting. This species certainly has the potential to breed in the wild in Scotland. Feral Pinkfeet, which were surveyed separately in 1991 by Simon Delany (*Brit. Birds* 86: 591-599), are comparatively easy to breed in captivity and have bred from time to time outside the bounds of collections. Delany found a total of 88 at 29 sites, of which 24, all additional to the pair listed above, were at or near traditional Scottish wintering areas.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

28 localities: 4-43 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality: male from late April to early June, but origin suspect.

England, SE Three localities: (1) pair displaying during April and May, but not seen subsequently; (2) pair summered; (3) male summered.

England, E Five localities: (1) pair summered; (2) female from 11th May to 6th June; (3) two males from 19th May to 6th June and female from 26th June to 7th July; (4) male for a few days in late May; (5) male on 4th July.

England, N Five localities: (1) five pairs in April, one to end of June, but no evidence of breeding; (2) pair on 12th May; (3) male from mid April to end of May, female in June; (4) two in early May, no breeding; (5) male on 26th April.

Wales One locality: two pairs attempted to breed, but no young reared.

Scotland, SW Two localities: (1) pair on 21st April; (2) male on 5th May.

Scotland, N & W 11 localities: (1) six pairs, two young fledged; (2) pair bred, female with seven young in July; (3) five or six pairs; (4) four or five pairs; (5) two pairs; (6) one or two pairs; (7) pair; (8) pair on 23rd April; (9) male in June; (10) female in May; (11) female from 4th to 13th June. No evidence of breeding at sites 3-11.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	16	18	23	15	17	14	16	20	16	20	28
Confirmed (pairs)	8	7	12	5	9	6	7	14	11	9	4
Possible (pairs)	23	25	20	13	12	12	14	15	28	27	39
Max. total pairs	31	32	32	18	21	18	21	29	38	36	43

There has been an increase in localities over 1990, but this is almost entirely confined to northwest Scotland and is the result of a special survey of Orkney carried out by Eric Meek for the RSPB. This confirms previous suggestions that this species is probably under-recorded by casual observations, requiring more detailed study to evaluate its true status.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

90 localities: 12-94 pairs breeding.

England, SW 11 localities in four counties: 2-10 pairs breeding.

England, SE 15 localities in seven counties: 4-16 pairs breeding.

England, E 32 localities in four counties: 2-35 pairs breeding.

England, Central Nine localities in four counties: 3-9 pairs breeding.

England, N 16 localities in seven counties: 1-16 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S Four localities: 0-4 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid, N & W Three localities: 0-4 pairs breeding.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	48	66	59	46	32	42	36	37	81	87	90
Confirmed (pairs)	8	10	15	4	4	8	8	11	18	14	12
Possible (pairs)	50	84	55	53	36	47	37	40	80	97	83
Max. total pairs	58	94	70	57	40	55	45	51	98	111	94

Although there has been a slight decline in the number of pairs (both confirmed and possible) over last year, the number of sites continues to increase. Regionally, the picture is uneven, with a decline in southeast England, but continued increases in central and northern areas. This species' preference for shallow water and dense emergent vegetation makes it particularly difficult to observe to the point of proving breeding.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

161 localities: 284-428 pairs breeding.

England, SW 15 localities in five counties: 9-27 pairs breeding.

England, SE 46 localities in nine counties: 110-193 pairs breeding.

England, E 26 localities in six counties: 48-64 pairs breeding.

England, Central Ten localities in five counties: 11-15 pairs breeding.

England, N 43 localities in eight counties: 77-92 pairs breeding.

Wales Three localities: three pairs breeding.

Scotland, S Nine localities: 11-15 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid Nine localities: 15-19 pairs breeding.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	68	63	138	116	133	161
Confirmed (pairs)	126	130	185	260	207	284
Possible (pairs)	59	44	162	76	86	144
Max. total pairs	185	174	347	336	293	428

The surge in numbers is welcome after last year's slight decline. It has long been thought that the population is higher than indicated by the reports reaching the Panel. A survey in 1986, based mainly on local bird reports, indicated a minimum of 375-395 pairs, and Dr A. D. Fox, of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, has suggested that numbers have remained stable over the last 25-30 years, with some sign of an increase in the 1980s (*Brit. Birds* 84: 83-98). We shall wait with interest to see whether the 1992 figures are evidence of a further rise in numbers or merely the result of better reporting to the Panel.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

Ten localities: 0-10 pairs.

Scotland, S, Mid, N & W Ten localities: (1)-(6) single pairs in June, no evidence of breeding; (7) male in May; (8) female on 18th July; (9)(10) single moulting males in July.

After just a single pair last year, this is the largest number of definite pairs ever reported to the Panel, with a bias towards northern Scotland, which remains the most likely area for successful nesting, despite the occasional more southerly records.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

One locality: one individual.

Scotland, N & W One locality: female or immature on 18th August.

The female which summered in mid Scotland in 1989 and 1990 was not seen this year. The above record was in the Western Isles, where breeding was suspected in 1969.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

14 localities: 9-30 pairs.

Northern Ireland One locality: two pairs bred.

Scotland, S and Mid Five localities: (1) two pairs on 10th May; (2) pair in June and July; (3) male and two females in April and May and three females in June; (4) male on 16th July, no evidence of breeding though it has occurred at this site; (5) at least one individual.

Scotland, N & W Eight localities.

ARGYLL Three localities: (1) up to ten pairs, four or five pairs bred, but success unknown; (2)(3) single pairs in June in suitable habitat.

CATHNESS Two localities: (1) female and five young on 29th July; (2) male on 15th June.

SUTHURLAND Two localities: (1) female on nest on 29th May; (2) pair displaying on 25th May.

SHEPHERD One locality: four pairs in May and June, one brood of three.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	6	17	6	9	25	35	15	36	7	9	14
Confirmed (pairs)	5	14	10	17	2	8	29	14	8	6	9
Possible (pairs)	77	98	75	52	72	92	33	76	32	23	21
Max. total pairs	82	112	85	69	74	100	62	90	40	29	30

A small but welcome increase in the number of localities. In many areas, however, reliable censuses depend on much more thorough surveying than is normally possible. The regular Argyll site was below its recent peak, but the Shetland site had more pairs than last year. The Northern Ireland population continues to give particular cause for concern.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Breeding almost exclusively in one extensive nest-box scheme, but increasing numbers summering elsewhere.

England, SW Two localities.

DORSET One locality: male summered for fifth consecutive year.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE One locality: up to three summered.

England, SE Two localities.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: female with damaged wing summered.

HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: four immature males and two females stayed to 6th May.

England, E One locality.

LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: two females on 30th June, one staying to 24th August.

England, Central One locality.

LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: up to eight individuals in May, two males displaying to three females on 1st June, one or two stayed to August, but no evidence of breeding.

England, N Seven localities.

DURHAM One locality: female and four young seen on 11th May.

LANCASHIRE Three localities: (1) three feral pairs bred, 18 young in May, further brood of seven young in August; (2) pair on 26th May; (3) female on 15th June.

NORTHUMBERLAND Two localities: (1) two juveniles from 4th August to end of month, not reared at site; (2) one juvenile from end July to end August, not reared at site.

Scotland, S 11 localities.

BORDERS Three localities: (1) pair and immature male on 6th June; (2) up to six males, late May and June; (3) male on 23rd June and 3rd July.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Two localities: (1) male and female in early July, perhaps failed breeders; (2) one male during summer.

LANARK Three localities: (1) two males summered; (2) one male summered; (3) immature summered.

LOTHIAN Three localities: (1) up to 11 in early May; (2) five in early May, one female on 26th June; (3) female on 26th May.

Scotland, Mid One locality.

PERTHSHIRE One locality: eggshells in nest-box when cleaned out.

Scotland, N & W Five localities.

CAITHNESS One locality: female on 28th June.

SHETLAND One locality: female summered.

WESTERN ISLES One locality: male, first reported, as immature, in 1987, still present.

HIGHLAND Nest-box area: incomplete survey of the boxes found 69 pairs breeding, of which 34 were successful, 926 eggs were laid and 301 young hatched. Elsewhere: two nests at one locality were both destroyed by predators.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Confirmed (pairs)	29	27	47	53	67	77	80	90	88	100	72
Young hatched (min.)	286	220	209	311	336	390	332	427	453	529	301

The long-running nest-box scheme, which began in the Spey valley in 1970, has now proved so successful that it has been decided, reluctantly, that it is no longer possible to monitor all the boxes annually. Colonisation

elsewhere has been slow, with confirmed breeding in Perthshire and Durham, in addition to the feral birds in Lancashire, but the number summering continues to increase both in Scotland and in England. It is at such sites that the placing of nest-boxes is most likely to lead to successful breeding.

Smew *Mergus albellus*

One locality: one individual.

England, Central One locality: summering individual, probably female.

The first summering reported since 1986 and the first in England since 1979.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

20 localities in 13 counties: 2-22 pairs breeding.

Great Britain 20 localities: (1) pair bred, laying two eggs and rearing two young; (2) pair seen in June and family party of adult and two juveniles in September; (3) recently fledged young found injured on 1st September, later died; (4) pair seen, including display, July and August; (5) pair from May to September and third individual in August, thought to have nested, but no young seen; (6) displaying pair seen from June to August; (7) one or two individuals all summer; (8) three on 1st June, four from 29th June to 1st September; (9) two on 17th August and one on 24th; (10) singles during breeding season; (11) one displaying on 27th July; (12) male on 19th May and several dates in August, including display; (13) one on dates in July and August, two at end of August; (14) one in suitable habitat on 22nd July; (15)(16) singles in June; (17)-(19) singles in July; (20) single in August.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Confirmed (pairs)	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	2
Max. total pairs	9	3	5	2	4	6	7	10	20	19	22

A very slight increase on 1990, in the same number of counties, confirming the more widespread distribution of the last few years. Some of the sightings are almost certainly of migrants on passage. On the other hand, a single observation at one locality in one year was followed the next by the discovery of a breeding pair, so that all sightings are worth pursuing and, as it is felt that this species is still under-recorded, worth reporting.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

92 pairs and at least 76 further individuals.

Wales 92 localities: 76 pairs were proved breeding, of which 41 were successful, rearing 62 young. In addition, a minimum of a further 76 unmated individuals was identified during the spring. Although the number of young reared was lower than last year's record total, the number of pairs attempting to breed was higher than ever. Unprecedented failures at the egg stage accounted for the poor production. The primary cause appeared to be the unseasonally cold weather during the main incubation month of April, which had a severely unsettling effect on the birds. The cold spring also followed a much colder winter than many recent ones, with snow and severe cold in February causing the kites to disperse widely. Seven clutches were stolen by egg-collectors (though one clutch was of dummy eggs!). Other failures included at least three attributable to human disturbance. (The Panel is indebted, as always, to Peter Davis, who is employed by the Countryside Council for Wales to study the kites, for his detailed report. The table, below, includes some minor revisions, mainly retrospective additions, for 1988-90.)

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Total pairs	46	17	46	46	51	58	59	68	71	84	92
Breeding pairs	32	38	33	33	343	40	44	49	54	65	76
Successful pairs	18	19	30	13	19	23	27	27	33	47	41
Young reared	21	23	24	21	25	29	39	38	49	73	62

The steady increase in the Welsh population continues, despite the slight hiccup of this year's poor production. Records back to the last century have been reviewed recently by Peter Davis (*Brit. Birds* 86: 295-298), showing that the low point in the population occurred as recently as the 1930s (with just ten pairs), instead of about 1905 as previously accepted.

The JNCC/RSPB experimental reintroduction programme entered its third year in 1991, with the release of 20 Swedish kites in Scotland and 11 Spanish and four Welsh kites in England. Survival of these birds continues to be high.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*
Reintroduction.

Scotland Eight pairs attempted to breed and seven young were reared, including one brood of two.

The best year by far for production of young, although the number of pairs remains low.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
92-111 'pairs' breeding.

Great Britain Analysing the information received on this partially polygamous species suggests the totals of 83 males and 91 females given in the table and the number of 'pairs' as above. The 198 young produced is a new record, but includes some estimations.

For the second year running, two pairs bred successfully in Scotland.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Breeding males	17	19	21	27	29	26	40	42	58	73	83
Breeding females	20	24	28	32	31	32	46	56	66	110	91
Young	48	59	71	66	86	82	126	145	172	145	198

The growth in numbers of this species in Britain in the last two decades has been remarkable: in 1973, the first year of the RBBP, there were just four sites with a total of four males and six females which, between them, reared 16 young. Protection of the nesting areas of this easily disturbed species has played a very significant part, for which the landholders as well as the conservation agencies must be praised. (The Panel is grateful to Mike Seago and Bob Image for much detailed information.)

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*
14 localities: 7-14 pairs breeding.

England, SW Seven localities: (1)-(3) pair bred at each site, all rearing young; (4) female in June and July, no male seen; (5) male during July, perhaps from nearby breeding site; (6)(7) 'ringtails' seen in May.

England, SE One locality: female throughout July.

England, E Five localities: (1)(2) pair bred at each site, both rearing young; (3) eggs laid but female apparently unmated; (4) nest failed; (5) female in June and July, male seen once, no evidence of breeding.

England, N One locality: pair displaying in late March, but no other sightings.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	8	7	8	2	9	10	10	14	15	9	14
Confirmed (pairs)	2	3	6	1	3	7	6	6	7	5	7
Possible (pairs)	7	5	4	1	6	3	4	8	8	4	7
Max. total pairs	9	8	10	2	9	10	10	14	15	9	14

A year of mixed fortunes, though one showing a welcome return to the

levels of 1988 and 1989 after the poor showing last year. The species' habit of nesting in crops can lead to problems in locating pairs and from unwitting disturbance by farming activities, although wardening schemes are in place to minimise this.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

At least 192 localities: 158-229 pairs breeding.

England and Wales At least 149 localities in 33 counties: (1)-(149) a minimum total of 127 pairs attempted to breed, of which 71 were known to be successful and 27 failed, mainly owing to nest robbery. The fate of the other 29 nests is uncertain. A minimum total of 121 young was reported to have fledged. There were a further 59 singles or pairs not proved breeding.



Scotland At least 43 localities in three regions: (1)-(31) a total of 31 pairs is known to have bred, of which 25 were successful and six failed; (32)-(41) total of ten pairs, but breeding not proved. (42)-(43) singles.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. counties	28	17	19	22	20	31	31	31	23	30	36
Confirmed (pairs)	17	24	34	36	36	57	54	108	112	93	158
Possible (pairs)	36	19	27	42	39	59	40	68	54	79	71
Max. total pairs	53	43	61	78	75	116	94	176	166	172	229

It is difficult to know how significant is the apparently sharp increase in the number of pairs, but it is noteworthy that nearly 70% of them were confirmed as breeding. The number of counties is also at an all-time high.

It is accepted that only some of the breeding goshawks in Britain are reported to the Panel, both because of the difficulties of working in the dense conifer forest in which most pairs nest and because there is still an entirely understandable reluctance on the part of some observers to part with information about pairs nesting or attempting to do so. Deliberate destruction of nests, eggs, young and adults remains by far the most commonly reported cause of nest failure and, even though the Panel can assure all recorders and observers that if they request that sites be treated as confidential then that is exactly how they are treated, it may well be that such an assurance is still not sufficient for some.

Estimates of the true breeding population of Northern Goshawks in Britain are extremely difficult to make, but Steve Petty of the Forest Authority's Wildlife and Research Branch, to whom, together with his team of goshawk-watchers, the Panel is indebted for much detailed information, has little doubt that the total is substantially higher even than the record numbers reported this year.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

73 pairs: 64 pairs laid eggs, fledging 82 young.

England, SE One locality: one from 18th May to 2nd June and (?same bird) from 19th to 23rd June, plus a second in late May.

England, E One locality: immature on several dates from 8th May to 14th July, a second on 1st June.

England, N One locality: single in early May.

Scotland A total of 73 eyries was occupied by pairs, nine more than in 1990, and a further two nests had single individuals. The 64 pairs which laid eggs is an increase of six over the previous year, but the number of successful pairs stayed the same while the number of young reared suffered the first drop for 15 years, a reflection of the higher-than-usual losses of eggs and young during prolonged periods of cold, wet weather.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Pairs	25	30	30	31	34	42	50	53	58	62	73
Successful pairs	20	21	20	21	22	24	30	38	38	44	44
Young reared	42	45	45	47	53	48	56	81	81	90	82

The population continues to increase and spread. The setback of this year's relatively poor production of young—only 1.12 per pair compared with a mean of 1.45 for the three preceding years—is unlikely to be more than temporary. (As usual, Roy Dennis and his associates provided the Panel with full information on which the above is based. The figures in the table include some minor updates to previously published data.)

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

At least 446 localities: 159-469 pairs breeding.

England, SW 59-143 pairs breeding, 93 young reported.

England, SE 47-170 pairs breeding, 60 young reported.

England, E 24-78 pairs breeding, 49 young reported.

England, Central 26-49 pairs breeding, 59 young reported.

England, N 0-19 pairs breeding, no young reported.

Wales 3-8 pairs breeding, four young reported.

Scotland 0-2 pairs breeding, one possible young reported.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Confirmed (pairs)	51	97	80	93	98	91	108	103	140	154	159
Possible (pairs)	10	105	182	116	148	202	164	226	250	287	310
Max. total (pairs)	160	202	262	209	246	293	272	329	390	441	469
Young reared (min.)	89	63	104	91	117	126	160	133	205	239	265

The species continues to increase and to expand its range, with noticeable increases, particularly, in southwest and southeast England, though slight reductions in eastern England and Wales. This was in a year when, as will be apparent from species accounts above, breeding success among birds of prey was, in general, much poorer than in 1990, owing to poor weather.

The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland (1993) estimates a total within the range 500-900 pairs, which is consistent with the numbers found and reported to the Panel.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

88 localities: 2-107 pairs breeding.

England, SW 29 localities: 1-41 pairs breeding.

England, SE 15 localities: 0-18 pairs breeding.

England, E 26 localities: 0-29 pairs breeding.

England, Central Four localities: 0-5 pairs breeding.

England, N Five localities: 1-5 pairs breeding.

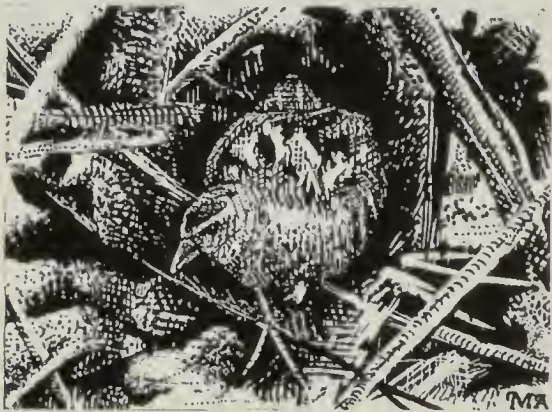
Scotland, S Nine localities: 0-9 pairs breeding.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	84	152	130	904	255	88
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	5	27	13	2
Possible (pairs)	110	245	158	1,628	364	105
Max. total pairs	111	246	163	1,655	377	107

Numbers have returned to a low level, comparable with that in the mid 1980s when the Panel first began gathering records of this species. The 1989 invasion was certainly of an impressive size, and perhaps suggests that there was a small ‘follow-on’ effect in 1990 that has now disappeared. We must now await the next invasion, but it does not seem to be tempting fate too much to suggest that the scale of the 1989 influx, the largest of the century thus far, is unlikely to be exceeded before the next century begins.

Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana*

Seven localities: 0-14 pairs breeding.
England, E Two localities: (1) one singing from 8th May; (2) one singing on several dates between 2nd July and 10th August.
Scotland, N & W Five localities: (1) three singing in late June, two pairs on 27th, pair singing on 10th July; (2) five singing; (3) two individuals responded to tape lure on 29th June; (4)(5) singles singing in June.



	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. counties	3	1	3	3	2	3	4	5	7	6	5
No. localities	4	2	6	4	2	3	7	6	14	14	7
No. singing	9	3	12	10	3	4	18	10	21	21	14

This is always considered to be a species of which a very high proportion of records refer merely to singing, thanks to its far-carrying and highly distinctive song, but its very secretive behaviour in inaccessible habitat. Thus, it is probably correct to report a relatively poor year after two better ones, even though the significance of this is unclear. The geographical balance shifted noticeably, with only two singing in England, compared with 16 and ten in 1989 and 1990 respectively. The 12 heard in Scotland represent the most since the Panel began collecting records in 1973.

Corn Crane *Crex crex*

Nine localities: 0-23 pairs breeding.
England, SW One locality.
SOMERSET One locality: one singing.
England, N Two localities: (1)(2) singles singing at each.
Scotland, Mid Two localities.
GRAMPLAN One locality: one singing during June and July.
UNNAMED DISTRICT One locality: single singing throughout summer.
Scotland, N & W Four localities.
ARGYLL One locality: 13 singing during June census.
CATHNESS Three localities: (1) up to three singing in May and June; (2) one singing from 21st June to end July; (3) one singing in late June.

Only records away from the Northern and Western Isles and Northern Ireland are collected by the Panel. The meagre return for this year represents a further decline on 1990. Active management, with payments to farmers and crofters to grow hay instead of silage and to delay mowing until August, is beginning to show promise in the islands, following a scheme implemented in Northern Ireland. It is naturally difficult to introduce such management for isolated singing Corn Crakes throughout the rest of Britain, though it must be worth attempting if they return to an area in successive years.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

One extensive locality.

United Kingdom Two pairs nested, but neither fledged young owing to predation. A third pair was present, but did not attempt to nest. The group of six was joined by an immature in March and early April. Six were again present in November and December, but decreased to five in late December.

Breeding or attempted breeding has now taken place every year since 1981. Unfortunately, the presence of this population continues to be publicised to birdwatchers via at least one monthly magazine, despite appeals for discretion on account of their extreme sensitivity to disturbance. It would be sad, indeed, if they were to be driven away by the very people to whom they give most pleasure.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

21 localities: 448-453 pairs reared about 305 young.

England, SE and E 21 localities: (1) 120 pairs bred, 21 young fledged; (2)-(5) total of 82 pairs bred, hatching 195 young of which 110 fledged; (6)-(9) total of 46 pairs bred, 45 young fledged; (10) 45 pairs had 98 breeding attempts, but reared only one young; (11) 35-40 pairs bred, fledging 40 young; (12) 35 pairs bred, 13 young fledged; (13) 22 pairs bred, success unknown; (14) 15 pairs bred, 39 young fledged; (15) 15 pairs reared 13 young; (16) 12 pairs reared at least five young; (17) 12 pairs bred, three young fledged; (18) five pairs bred, ten young fledged; (19) two pairs bred, five young fledged; (20) one pair bred, nest washed out by high tide; (21) one pair bred, success unknown.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	5	9	9	11	14	15	18	27	24	21	21
Confirmed (pairs)	201	190	238	237	269	255	341	389	521	355	448
Young reared (min.)	155	150	192	118	245	227	315	136	150	200	305

After last year's drop, the number of breeding pairs has risen to the second-best ever, as has the number of young reared, after three years of relatively low numbers. There is, as usual, very considerable variability in success between different colonies, with, first, some of the smaller ones being proportionately much more successful than larger ones and, secondly, more-recent colonies being more successful than longer-established ones.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Ten counties: 139-155 pairs.

England, SW Four counties: nine pairs present, at least six young fledged.

England, SE Three counties: 50 pairs present, at least 39 young fledged.

England, E Three counties: 96 pairs present, at least 78 young fledged.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Confirmed (pairs)	10	8	20	19	68	103	137	126	126	139	139
Possible (pairs)	43	59	76	52	47	12	0	3	17	10	16
Max. total pairs	53	67	96	71	115	115	137	129	143	149	155

Totals up to the mid 1980s certainly substantially underestimate the true total. The slight upward trend in the 'maximum' number of pairs since about 1987 is probably accurate because recent coverage, principally by RSPB protection wardens, has been relatively uniform and systematic. Even so, mark-resighting studies of colour-ringed birds in Breckland suggest that about 10% of the adult population is not located in the breeding season. The actual adult population in 1991 was, therefore, probably about 170 pairs.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Three localities: 0-3 pairs breeding (excluding those in main Scottish breeding area).

England, N One locality.

CUMBRIA One locality: individuals seen in May, no evidence of breeding.

Scotland, S Two localities.

BORDERS One locality: three in May, probably on passage.

LANARK One locality: female seen on 28th May in suitable habitat.

The Panel is concerned only with potential nesting outwith the main breeding range and recognises that most records reaching it from southern Scotland and northern England will be casual observations. The locality in the Borders where breeding took place in 1990 was not searched this year.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Two localities: 3-4 breeding pairs.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) three pairs displaying at the regularly occupied site; (2) one on 19th July.

In the last ten years, the maximum total of pairs has been between one and five, with no sign of any increase. The one regular breeding site was surveyed after last year's gap and the presence of three pairs confirmed.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Two localities: 3 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) two pairs bred, one young fledged; (2) nest found with clutch of five eggs, but no further information.

Three confirmed breeding pairs matches the previous best year, 1987. This species is notoriously unwilling to leave its nest and the finding of breeding pairs is, therefore, always going to include an element of luck.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Nine localities: 7-15 females nesting.

England, E Seven localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) at least four females nested; (2) three females at lek, one or two nested.

NORFOLK One locality: adult until late June.

UNNAMED COUNTY Four localities: (1) two females nested, no young fledged; (2) pair in suitable habitat, late June; (3) three females in suitable breeding habitat throughout June; (4) pair displaying in suitable habitat in June, but did not stay to breed.

England, N Two localities.

CHESHIRE One locality: five males and one female in early April, occasional lekking by two males, but all left by 8th May.

UNNAMED COUNTY One locality: three males lekking in May, one until 23rd June.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	10	13	8	6	8	7	16	14	15	8	9
Nests	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	7
Max. no. females possibly nesting	13	23	32	6	8	9	69	11	17	15	15

Although none appeared at any of the three Essex localities this year, new sites were found elsewhere in eastern England where Ruffs were present in suitable habitat. The total of seven definite nesting attempts is comfortably the highest since the Panel was created in 1973.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

18 localities: 28-53 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality.

SOMERSET One locality: one pair nested, but eggs infertile; one or two singles also present.

England, SE Four localities.

ESSEX Two localities: (1) three pairs bred, one of which failed but re-nested; (2) pair bred.

KENT Two localities: (1) pair in late May, in suitable breeding habitat; (2) single summered in suitable breeding habitat.

England, E Seven localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) 14 pairs, of which at least eight nested and four or five produced young, and at least four fledged; (2) at least eight (and perhaps as many as 13) pairs nested, four successful, fledging 12 young.

NORFOLK Four localities: (1) two pairs bred unsuccessfully; (2) one pair bred, hatching one young which did not fledge; (3)(4) single pairs bred unsuccessfully.

UNNAMED COUNTY One locality: two pairs probably bred.

England, N One locality.

CUMBRIA One locality: adult in late May.

Scotland, Mid One locality.

DUNBARTONSHIRE One locality: pair false-nest-building in late May.

Scotland, N & W Four localities.

ORKNEY One locality: pair throughout most of May, but no evidence of breeding.

SHETLAND One locality: two pairs fledged two young.

UNNAMED COUNTY Two localities: (1) three on 3rd June; (2) six on 7th June.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	5	13	10	12	11	19	13	17	14	16	18
Confirmed (pairs)	22	38	32	55	22	23	28	36	34	33	28
Possible (pairs)	4	31	12	25	17	24	12	28	22	33	25
Max. total pairs	26	69	44	80	39	47	40	64	56	66	53

An average year for numbers of pairs, though an increase in localities, mainly in northern England and Scotland. Summering birds, sometimes in flocks, confuse the picture. For example, there were up to 94, many in full breeding plumage, present at a locality in Cheshire during May and June, but there was no sign of display or nesting.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

One locality.

Scotland, N & W One locality.

CAITHNESS One locality: four present from May to July.

This was the only report received from the Scottish mainland. (Information

from the regular sites in the Northern and Western Isles is not collected by the Panel.)

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Two localities: 1-2 pairs bred.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) pair bred, but success not reported; (2) agitated adult behaving as if young present on 5th July.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	1	4	3	4	3	2	3	4	6	2	2
Confirmed (pairs)	1	3	1	4	2	2	3	3	2	1	1
Possible (pairs)	0	3	4	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1
Max. total pairs	1	6	5	5	3	3	4	4	6	2	2

Not all known localities for this species are visited every year.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*

One locality: one probably bred with Common Sandpiper *A. hypoleucos*.

England, N One locality: adult from 30th June to 7th July at Welbeck Southern Washlands Nature Reserve, West Yorkshire, apparently paired to a Common Sandpiper with three young, which fledged on 4th July. It was seen in display flight and to be standing guard near the family party. The record has been accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee (*Brit. Birds* 85: 528).

While not proved as hybridising with the Common Sandpiper, it seems strongly probable that this did occur. This species nested in Britain for the only time in 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 288-292).

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Five localities: 16-21 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W Five localities: (1) 15 broods; (2) one brood seen; (3) up to three pairs bred, but no attempt made to find young; (4) two males and one female in usual area, breeding suspected, but no young thought to have been produced; (5) female in late May.

This is the best year since 1984, with excellent success at one site in particular, where the habitat is being skilfully managed.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

13 localities: 15-23 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality: pair bred.

England, SE Seven localities: (1) five pairs bred and four young fledged; (2) one pair bred, producing one young; (3) pair bred, but eggs destroyed; (4)(5) total of three pairs, success unknown; (6)(7) single pairs, success unknown.

England, E Two localities: (1) adult feeding hybrid young (with Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*) in early July; (2) three pairs bred but no young fledged.

England, N Three localities: (1) two adults in April, one stayed until early July; (2) sub-adult in Black-headed Gull colony from mid April to early June; (3) adult in late March.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	4	2	6	4	3	5	3	9	5	10	13
Confirmed (pairs)	3	2	2	4	3	1	1	5	6	11	15
Possible (pairs)	3	1	6	1	5	4	2	10	3	5	8
Max. total pairs	6	3	8	5	8	5	3	15	9	16	23

Breeding success remains low, but the number of pairs has shown an encouraging increase to a new high level, while the number of localities at which pairs or singles are present, if not breeding yet, is also on the increase.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

One locality: 1-2 pairs probably bred.

Scotland, Mid One locality: up to four adults in colony of Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* in June; four juveniles on 25th June and three on 28th.

Although no nest was found, the county recorder considers that the evidence constitutes proof of breeding. There was a similar occurrence in 1988, with the only previous indication of breeding in Scotland, when a very recently fledged juvenile was seen.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*

One locality: one individual.

England, N One locality.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: female from 14th May to 18th August, mated to Sandwich Tern *S. sandwicensis*; seen probably incubating on 30th May, in poor weather; nest subsequently abandoned.



Now in its eighth consecutive year, this bird has bred or attempted to breed, mated with a Sandwich Tern, on six occasions, but hybrid young have been reared only twice.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

13 localities: 52-57 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities.

ISLES OF SCILLY Two localities: (1) two pairs bred, one young definitely fledged, another probably did; (2) pair, but breeding not confirmed.

England, SE One locality: pair prospecting in June, juvenile (of uncertain origin) on 22nd July.

England, N Four localities: (1) 20 pairs laid 31 eggs of which 20 hatched and 13 young fledged; (2) two pairs bred, at least one young fledged; (3) pair bred, at least one young fledged; (4) pair bred, but failed to rear any young.

Wales Three localities: (1) three pairs fledged about three young; (2) pair bred, but deserted soon after laying; (3) adults present, but no eggs laid.

Scotland, Mid One locality: minimum of 18 pairs, with 12 clutches laid and minimum of 15 juveniles fledged.

Scotland, N & W One locality: pair seen on territory in June and may have laid, though were not successful.

Northern Ireland One locality: four pairs bred and four young fledged.

A further serious decline in numbers since 1990, though, for the second year running, the main part of the breeding population of Britain and Ireland has shifted to the latter country.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

One locality: two females.

Scotland, N & W One locality: two females present throughout the year. (For all the year's records, see *Brit. Birds* 85: 532.)

And still they hang on, waiting for 'Mr Right' to come along.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Six localities: 1-6 pairs breeding.

England, E One locality: one in suitable breeding habitat on 20th June.

England, Central One locality: one singing on 30th April.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: (1) pair bred, but eggs taken by predator; (2) one singing on 25th May.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) one singing on 9th and 10th June; (2) one singing on 7th July.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	2	9	14	9	9	9	10	9	8	6	6
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Possible (pairs)	2	10	15	10	8	8	9	9	7	6	5
Max. total pairs	2	10	15	10	9	9	10	10	8	6	6

A return, after last year's blank, to a single confirmed breeding attempt, albeit unsuccessful, and no improvement in the reduced number of localities.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

59-362 pairs breeding.

England, SW 24-168 pairs breeding.

DEVON Six localities: (1) up to 13 pairs, at least one bred; (2)-(6) single pairs at each, breeding proved at one.

DORSET Ten localities: total of 29 pairs, of which nine definitely bred and 16 probably did.

HAMPSHIRE Incomplete survey of New Forest produced minimum of 60 pairs; further 60 pairs elsewhere, at least 12 of which were known to have fledged young.

WILTSHIRE One locality: pair bred, rearing one young.

England, SE 12 localities: 4-34 pairs breeding.

BEDFORDSHIRE One locality: single in late March.

BERKSHIRE Four localities: at least 19 pairs or singing males, one pair known to have bred successfully.

SURREY Six localities: 12 pairs bred or probably did so, with young at two sites.

SUSSEX One locality: two pairs, one produced at least one young.

England, E Five localities: 29-157 pairs breeding.

LINCOLNSHIRE Two localities: two pairs, one proved to breed, and four or five further males.

NORFOLK One locality: 49 pairs; of 13 nests checked, ten were successful.

SUFFOLK Two localities (one extensive): (1) 37 pairs; of 15 nests checked, eight were successful; (2) survey of extensive locality produced 60-64 pairs.

England, Central One locality.

UNNAMED COUNTY One locality: three pairs, of which two bred successfully.

A further increase on last year's good total, particularly in southwest England, even though the survey work in that area was not regarded as complete. Elsewhere, numbers are holding steady.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

One locality: one individual.

Scotland, Mid One locality: single on 25th July, possibly on passage.

Although there was no indication of breeding behaviour, summer records are sufficiently unusual for it to be worth recording this one.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

36 localities: 23-69 pairs breeding.

England, SE 19 localities.

BERKSHIRE Two localities: (1) singing male in early May; (2) singing male on 13th June.

ESSEX One locality: pair probably bred.

KENT Six localities: (1)(2) single pairs bred and further singing male at each site; (3) pair bred; (4) three pairs; (5)(6) single pairs.

LONDON Four localities: (1) pair bred and further singing male present; (2) pair summered; (3)(4) singing males in summer.

SURREY Six localities: (1) pair bred; (2) pair summered; (3) male in March and May, female in March; (4) single in May, and pair on 1st June; (5)(6) singles in May.

England, E Eight localities.

LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: single on 15th April.
NORFOLK One locality: two pairs bred, with further two or three singing males.
SUFFOLK Six localities: (1) four pairs bred; (2) two pairs bred, and further two pairs probably did so; (3) two pairs bred successfully; (4) pair bred, two additional singing males and a further possible pair; (5) pair probably bred; (6) up to nine singing males in suitable breeding habitat.
England, Central Seven localities.
DERBYSHIRE One locality: pair present through April.
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: one to three singing males from 3rd May.
STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: male on several dates in April to June.
WEST MIDLANDS Four localities: (1) pair bred successfully; (2) male singing in April with further possible sub-adult male; (3) male singing in July; (4) female or sub-adult male on 12th April.
England, N Two localities.
LANCASHIRE One locality: female and recently fledged juvenile in early August.
YORKSHIRE One locality: five pairs bred, of which two each reared two broods.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	92	77	70	56	50	36
Confirmed (pairs)	81	46	54	36	28	23
Possible (pairs)	38	63	58	46	46	46
Max. total pairs	119	109	118	82	74	69

This species continues to decline, in both numbers of localities and numbers of pairs, since it was reinstated as a Panel species in 1986. Whilst it is possible that under-reporting is still a problem, the situation must now be regarded as increasingly gloomy. Once again, we would appeal for *all* breeding-season sightings in potential breeding habitat to be reported to the relevant county recorders.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

13 localities: 2-13 pairs breeding.
England, SE Two localities.
ESSEX One locality: one with Mistle Thrushes *T. viscivorus* in early June, the second such sighting there in the last four years.
KENT One locality: adult feeding recently fledged young on 30th May.
England, E One locality.
SUFFOLK One locality: single on 9th June.
England, Central Four localities.
DERBYSHIRE Four localities: (1) pair in May, giving alarm calls; (2)-(4) singles in June.
England, N Two localities.
CUMBRIA One locality: pair, including singing male, in May, but breeding not proved.
DURHAM One locality: adult seen several times between 25th May and 6th July.
Scotland, S Two localities.
BORDERS Two localities: (1)(2) singles 'alarming' in late April, but not seen subsequently.
Scotland, Mid One locality.
GRAMPIAN One locality: pair with two juveniles on 19th June.
Scotland, N & W One locality.
CAITHNESS One locality: four, possibly a family party, flew over on 8th July.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	6	7	10	4	3	2	7	7	12	12	13
Confirmed (pairs)	0	2	3	0	0	2	1	2	3	5	2
Possible (pairs)	6	5	9	4	3	0	6	5	10	7	11
Max. total pairs	6	7	12	4	3	2	7	7	13	12	13

Although only two pairs were proved to be breeding, the number of localities and number of possible pairs maintain the slightly higher levels of recent

years. The wide geographic spread should be noted, including the second case in the last four years of confirmed breeding in southern England, the previous occasion being in Berkshire in 1988. Clearly, nowhere is impossible, while the continued reports of association with Mistle Thrushes are also worth bearing in mind.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

15 localities: 7-20 pairs breeding.

England, E Two localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: pair in summer.

SUFFOLK One locality: single in suitable breeding habitat on 2nd June.

Scotland, Mid One locality: juvenile in late June.

Scotland, N & W 12 localities: (1) two pairs with clutches, third pair believed to have nested; (2) pair reared two broods; (3) pair bred successfully; (4) three pairs, no nests located; (5) two nests, one destroyed by predators; (6) pair nest-building on 26th June; (7)(8) single individuals singing in June and July; (9) single singing in April; (10) report of two individuals, one carrying food; (11) adult on 6th July; (12) one on 13th June, though in unlikely breeding area.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	6	42	65	58	35	32	39	22	38	17	15
Confirmed (pairs)	4	30	17	31	12	20	9	10	12	6	7
Possible (pairs)	7	32	51	48	23	26	41	30	39	15	13
Max. total pairs	11	62	68	79	35	46	50	49	51	21	20

Similar numbers to last year, though with renewed sightings in eastern England. While it may be that last year's decline is being confirmed by these figures, the variability in coverage and reporting is probably too great for confident deductions to be made.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

80 localities: 27-241 breeding 'pairs'.

England, SW 46 localities in seven counties: 10-181 'pairs' breeding.

England, SE 11 localities in four counties: 6-17 'pairs' breeding.

England, E 16 localities in three counties: 11-31 'pairs' breeding.

Wales Seven localities in three counties: 0-12 'pairs' breeding.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. counties	16	12	13	13	13	11	14	14	15	21	17
Confirmed ('pairs')	56	29	90	78	59	4	31	24	12	19	27
Possible ('pairs')	106	173	157	238	190	175	156	174	196	326	214
Max. total 'pairs'	162	202	247	316	249	179	187	198	208	345	241

This year has seen a very significant decline in numbers, both of localities and of singing males, following the bumper year of 1990. (N.B. The use of the term 'pairs' has been normal in these reports, but does not properly represent the true situation for this highly polygynous species, whose females and nests are very difficult to find.) It remains to be seen whether 1990 was an upward blip, or if the population will recover its upward path. Most of the decline seems to have taken place in southwest England and it is possible that the amount of survey work has been reduced. It seems more likely, however, that the cold weather experienced in February and the cool and damp spring were more significant factors.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

13 localities: 0-16 pairs breeding.

England, SE One locality: singing male from late April to end July.**England, E** 11 localities.

NORFOLK Seven localities: (1)(2) two singing at each site; (3)-(7) singles singing.

ELSEWHERE Four localities in two counties: (1) two singing males; (2)-(4) single singing males.

England, N One locality.

LANCASHIRE One locality: one singing from mid April to late June.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	8	11	12	10	12	9	16	10	13	5	13
Confirmed (pairs)	5	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Possible (pairs)	10	18	15	12	14	11	20	13	17	9	16
Max. total pairs	15	18	17	12	15	12	20	13	17	10	16

A better year, after the poor showing in 1990, with a return to several eastern England sites where this species was apparently absent last year. None of the former regular sites in southeast England has, however, been recolonised after their abandonment last year.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

15 localities: 9-32 pairs breeding.

England, SW Three localities: (1) singing from 25th May, two or three individuals carrying nest material in June; (2) two singing males in June; (3) one singing male in June.**England, SE** Seven localities: (1)-(7) totals of 20 singing males and at least 11 pairs, but rain washed out several nests.**England, Central** Four localities.

WORCESTERSHIRE Four localities: (1)-(4) single pairs bred successfully at each site.

England, N One locality: pair bred successfully.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	3	26	26	28	23	18	11	13	10	12	15
Confirmed (pairs)	0	2	3	4	2	12	10	6	11	13	9
Possible (pairs)	3	72	53	47	40	16	11	14	11	11	23
Max. total pairs	3	74	56	51	42	28	21	20	22	24	32

The slight recovery in numbers of both sites and pairs noted in 1990 has continued in all areas, with Worcestershire back up to four sites compared with only one in 1989, though most of the increase has been in southeast England. Let us hope that this trend continues.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

One locality: one individual.

England, N One locality.LANCASHIRE One locality: singing male at Leighton Moss during 4th to 13th June (*Brit. Birds* 86: 513).

This is the second consecutive year that this species has been reported to the Panel.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

67-701 pairs breeding.

England, SW County maxima:

CORNWALL 1, DEVON 54, DORSET 221, HAMPSHIRE over 400, SOMERSET 1.

England, SE County maxima:

BERKSHIRE 1, SURREY 20, SUSSEX 2.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. counties	7	6	6	6	5	5	8	6	5	8	8
Confirmed (pairs)	50	8	14	11	26	15	8	26	23	55	67
Possible (pairs)	69	304	134	429	368	293	239	616	499	873	634
Max. total pairs	119	312	148	440	394	308	247	639	522	928	701

Although there has been a sharp decline compared with last year, it should be emphasised that, as the population has increased, so it has become more and more difficult to census all the pairs, particularly in complex areas such as the New Forest, hence the estimated total for Hampshire, which should be regarded as an absolute minimum.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

19 localities: 2-22 pairs breeding.

England, SW Seven localities.

GLoucestershire Three localities: (1) two males in May; (2)(3) single males in May and June.

HAMPSHIRE Three localities: (1)(2) single pairs bred; (3) singing male in April.

WILTshire One locality: singing bird in May.

England, SE 11 localities.

BEDFORDSHIRE One locality: singing male in suitable breeding habitat in March.

BERKSHIRE Three localities: (1)-(3) single singing males in May.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: two territories.

ESSEX One locality: single singing male in May.

LONDON One locality: female in May.

SURREY Three localities: (1) singing male in May, probably bred; (2)(3) singles singing in April, no evidence of breeding.

SUSSEX One locality: singing male in May.

England, E One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: two singing males in May and June.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	35	21	75	47	24	19	37	44	52	48	19
Confirmed (pairs)	15	4	6	4	5	1	8	11	19	9	2
Possible (pairs)	87	40	169	78	41	28	74	72	112	88	20
Max. total pairs	102	44	175	82	46	29	82	83	131	97	22

A very poor season, with the lowest number of pairs since 1978 and the lowest number of sites since 1986. The decline was evident right across the range, with no reports at all from central and northern England, or from Wales, where the species has bred regularly in small numbers since 1983. Spring weather is thought to be the dominating factor in determining how many reach our shores in any one year.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

27 localities: 16-28 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities: (1) pair bred, rearing one young; (2) male heard in May and June, a possible pair, or second male, in early June.

England, SE One locality: pair probably bred.

England, E 36 localities surveyed and a minimum of 15 breeding pairs found. Seven nests produced fledged young, a further six nests failed, mainly owing to predators, the outcome of the six others being unknown. A further eight sites held singles, with no evidence of breeding.

England, Central One locality: pair singing in May.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	13	12	14	11	12	13	22	35	29	38	27
Confirmed (pairs)	4	3	2	4	4	5	11	16	15	10	16
Possible (pairs)	22	18	19	14	11	11	20	25	22	32	12
Max. total pairs	26	21	21	18	15	17	31	41	37	42	28

A relatively poor year for both breeding pairs and production of young. The eastern England population was once again surveyed by the Golden Oriole Group, to whom the Panel is most grateful for its detailed information. The colonisation of East Anglia by Golden Orioles, their status and conservation were recently documented and discussed (*Brit. Birds* 87: 205-219).

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Four localities: 1-4 pairs breeding.

England, E Three localities: (1) pair bred successfully; (2) male present during second half of May; (3) female in possible breeding habitat on 3rd July.

Scotland, Mid One locality: male on 7th July.



	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	6	2	3	4	7	3	8	6	3	7	4
Confirmed (pairs)	11	5	11	6	6	4	2	1	0	1	1
Possible (pairs)	29	3	1	4	6	2	11	6	6	7	3
Max. total pairs	40	8	12	10	12	6	13	7	6	8	4

The optimism engendered in last year's Report by the increase in sites and numbers was not borne out this year, when the maximum number of pairs sank to the lowest ever, even though one pair successfully reared a brood.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

One locality: one individual.

England, E One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: a bird, probably of the Iberian race *meridionalis*, spent the period from 18th May to 8th July in an area of farmland.

A fascinating record and the first report of this species to reach the Panel since 1975.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Two localities: 0-2 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: (1) male singing and displaying on 11th May; (2) male singing on 28th May.

The first relevant Scottish records since 1988 and the first on the mainland since 1987. This species remains extremely unpredictable in its summer appearances, though this should only encourage observers to watch or listen for it. In the early 1980s, it was seen in up to ten localities.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Two localities: 0-2 pairs.

England, SW Two localities.

DEVON Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males in May.

These are the first reports from Devon since 1988, but there is no cause for optimism with a complete absence of relevant reports from anywhere else in the UK and no sign of a return to the five to nine pairs found in seven of the eight years from 1981.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Four localities: 1-6 pairs breeding.

England, N Two localities.

DURHAM Two localities: (1) maximum of ten (four males and six females) in January, with three pairs displaying on 26th; (2) male on 10th March, calling repeatedly in an agitated manner.

Scotland, N & W Two localities.

HIGHLAND Two localities: (1) pair nested, fledging four young; (2) adult male on 7th July.

There was a considerable influx of this species in autumn 1990, with a total of 159 confirmed records (*Brit. Birds* 85: 550). Unlike the last big influx, in 1983, however, when some stayed to breed in 1984 and 1985, the great majority of birds this time apparently returned to whence they had come. There was a scattering of other reports in January-March 1991, but the above were the sole instances of breeding or display noted.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

One locality: 0-2 pairs breeding.

England, N One locality: at least two males and one female throughout July. Both males sang and one paired with the female, but no breeding took place.

1990 Scotland, N & W ERRATUM The entry for a successful breeding pair in Shetland should, in fact, have referred to Sutherland.

The initial stages of a successful colonisation of northern England the following year (*Brit. Birds* 85: 646).

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Two localities: 24 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W 23 nests found during a survey; an adult and four immatures elsewhere.

Although the survey work has become more intensive in recent years, it still covers only a part of the population. Total numbers have more recently been estimated at 70-100 pairs (*The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*, 1993).

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

98-241 breeding pairs.

England, SW

CORNWALL Nine localities: (1) pair bred, rearing at least one young and building again in August; (2) pair in spring, female and juvenile nearby in late August; (3) pair in April and May, and male until at least 2nd July; (4) male singing in spring, pair in late May, and three males and two females in June; (5)-(9) single singing males from March to July.

DEVON 231 occupied territories found during a thorough survey of the county. Of these, 97 held pairs which were confirmed as breeding, a further 11 probably did so, while in the remaining 123 territories there was a possibility that breeding occurred.

SOMERSET One locality: singing male on two dates in July.

The extremely detailed and thorough research, habitat management and survey work carried out in Devon by Dr Andy Evans for the RSPB, in conjunction with the Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society, has resulted in an enormous increase in the number of known territories in that county. Some of the increase is due to much greater effort, but a growing part is due to a better understanding of the specific habitat and food requirements of this species. Two of the more important requirements are an abundance of weed seeds for winter feeding, a resource which has declined with the ever-more-rapid ploughing of autumn stubbles, and a rich source of invertebrates for feeding the nestlings, which these buntings traditionally obtained from unimproved grasslands, another declining habitat. Management based on this knowledge should give this species a more assured future than seemed likely only a few years ago.

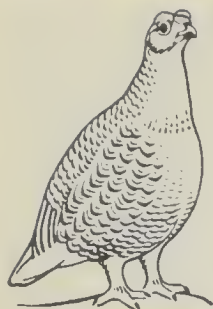
Dr M. A. Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN

[It is the aim of the Panel to produce two annual reports in the next 12 months, and we hope to publish that for 1992 in spring 1995 and that for 1993 in autumn 1995. EDS]



Twenty-five years ago...

In August 1969, there was the start of a huge influx of Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea* with over 19,000 bird-days from 250 localities. The peak came on 31st August, when there were at least 3,500 present. The all-time ringing total was more than doubled, from 311 to 718. (*Brit. Birds* 64: 146; 65: 379)



Letters

Those Ruddy Ducks The status of the Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* seems to be causing much heartache among birdwatchers at present (c.g. *Brit. Birds* 86: 338). The fact that it has started to hybridise with the small population of the endangered White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala* in Spain has prompted cries of anguish from the Spanish, who have done much to reverse the decline in the White-headed Duck population; experiments aimed at investigating how best to limit the spread of the Ruddy Duck in Britain have therefore been initiated. These have in turn prompted cries of anguish from some British ornithologists, living some distance from the White-headed Ducks, who feel that they have an attractive and harmless addition to their avifauna. The West Midland Bird Club has even adopted the Ruddy Duck as its emblem.

I think that complaints at culling are irresponsible, illogical and emotional, and I should like to justify my contrary position. I should add that I write as an unbiased ornithologist. I am, though, a mammalogist deeply concerned about the impact of two other North American imports, the grey squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* and the mink *Mustela vison*.

The native red squirrel *S. vulgaris* has been and is being displaced from its range in England, Wales and central Scotland by the grey squirrel. The only hope for the survival of red squirrels in England and Wales lies in killing grey squirrels that encroach on red squirrel strongholds, and perhaps in feeding red squirrels selectively in those strongholds. How much easier if the grey squirrels had never been introduced; the trouble is that they are attractive, diurnal mammals, do well in parks and gardens, and are even admired by those who resent their theft of peanuts intended for Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* and their egg-stealing and nestling-killing habits. Certainly, killing grey squirrels is not popular with the public.

What about the mink? That, too, is a very successful, and attractive, mammal, with a very fine waterproof pelage. In a countryside largely devoid of polecats *M. putorius*, pine martens *Martes martes* and otters *Lutra lutra*, it fulfils the role of a medium-sized predator admirably. Warnings about its potential impact were ignored in the 1950s when the first breeding records were reported. As a result, we think that there are now about 45,000, and there is no way that we can exterminate them all.

We did exterminate two other American mammals, the muskrat *Ondatra zibethicus* and the coypu *Myocastor coypus*. Both were agricultural pests, which put some premium on dealing with them. Most importantly, though, both had fairly small and geographically limited populations. There were about 4,400 muskrats, limited to four populations in Britain (and a fifth in Ireland). Coypus

must have numbered over 100,000 at one point, but severe winters reduced them, and they were restricted to East Anglia; the trap-out campaign from 1981 to 1987 killed around 6,000.

What has all this to do with Ruddy Ducks? Well, I think there are important parallels. At present the British population is about 600 pairs, and the winter population is nearing 4,000 birds, according to the *New Breeding Bird Atlas*. Given quick action, it may just be possible to eliminate a population of that size, though its geographical spread suggests, already, that this may be difficult.

Given its migratory tendencies, it would be irresponsible not to try to stabilise the population. The species is not endangered in North America, but the White-headed Duck is endangered throughout its western European range. If our Ruddy Duck population is allowed to increase, it is certain to populate nearby countries as well as our own.

Unlike coypus, Ruddy Ducks can fly, and in North America regularly migrate 3,000 km or so. They should not be allowed to do so in western Europe.

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White-tailed Eagles Mike Everett & Bob Scott stated (*Brit. Birds* 87: 305) that the world population of the White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* 'totals some 5,000 pairs'.

It would be interesting to know when, and by whom, the data enabling an estimate of the number breeding on the coasts of the former USSR from the White Sea to Ussuriland, and inland waters from the Caspian to Mongolia, were assembled.

How many pairs exist, for example, on the Yenisey or in Kamchatka?

JOHN GORDON PARKER

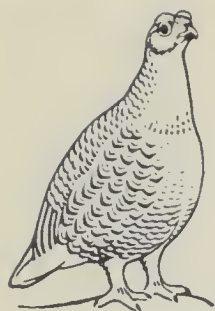
The Hall, Stoke Ferry, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE33 9SE

Mike Everett & Bob Scott have replied as follows: 'Mr Parker is quite correct to query a world population of 5,000 pairs for the White-tailed Eagle. We were perhaps at fault to qualify the figure only with a preceding "some", making it appear a little too positive.

'Censuses conducted in the 1980s indicated that the Western Palearctic population was in excess of 2,000 pairs (Génsbol 1989). Of these, some 450-500 pairs were in Russia. Kolosov (1983) and Borodin (1984) indicated a population in the former USSR of 2,000 or more pairs. Thus, it did not seem unreasonable that the world population should number some 5,000 pairs. Indeed, the source of the information quoted in "News and comment" (*Wild und Hund* 23/1993, quoted in *Naturopa* no. 93-12) stated "there are now only some 5,000 pairs of *Haliaeetus albicilla* in the world". We have now consulted BirdLife International for the latest, up-to-date figures, which are: approximately 3,500 pairs in Europe to the Urals; 1,500 pairs in Kamchatka and the far east of Russia; 300 pairs in Khazakhstan; perhaps 5,000-14,000 pairs in Siberia. Taking the most pessimistic view, the *absolute* minimum figure for the current world population quoted by BirdLife International is 8,000 pairs.' EDS

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Notes

Separation of Tawny Eagle from Steppe Eagle in Israel Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* generally looks smaller and rather puny (and also, when perched, less elongated/horizontal) compared with Steppe Eagle *A. nipalensis*. Diagnostically, the North African race *A. r. belisarius* differs in all plumages from Steppe in being smaller, in having the creamy-white of the uppertail-coverts extending well up onto the upper back (on Steppe, usually restricted to uppertail-coverts, lacking on rump and only indistinct on lower back), in showing a conspicuous sandy wedge on the inner primaries below (generally indistinct or absent on Steppe) and, in juvenile/immature plumages, lacking Steppe's whitish underwing-band; the remiges and rectrices are usually finely barred or almost unbarred compared with corresponding plumages of Steppe. The general coloration of Tawny's body and underwing-coverts is pale tawny or buffish-yellow to pale foxy/rufous (or dark greyish-brown, but this is virtually confined to more southerly populations/races), contrasting highly with the remiges and rectrices: more or less reminiscent of the underpart pattern of juvenile Imperial Eagle *A. heliaca*, but unstreaked. The mantle, scapulars and upperwing-coverts are also distinctly tawny-sandy, but with the feathers dark-centred (chiefly on greater coverts, tertials and lower scapulars). In good views, mainly when perched, Tawny normally shows a slightly shorter gape line, ending level with the centre of the eye (reaches rear edge on Steppe); the adult's iris is yellowish-brown (dark brown on Steppe). In flight, compared with Steppe, Tawny has broad and short wings with ample 'hand', and shows a well-protruding head and a relatively short and more square-ended tail; in active flight, it is rather stiff-winged with more rapid wingbeats. Tawny is rather noisy, giving 'kah' or 'kowk-kowk' calls (Steppe is predominantly silent on passage or in winter).

The above description summarises the principal features by which the first Tawny Eagle for Israel, in November 1992 in the Negev (*Brit. Birds* 87: 5), was identified; see also accompanying plates 102-107. HADORAM SHIRIHAI
PO Box 4168, Eilat 88102, Israel

The author welcomes comments and any relevant material, including photographs, on the entire *rapax-nipalensis* complex in Africa and Asia for possible future publication in these pages. These should be sent to HS at the address above. EDS

102-107. Facing page: three left-hand plates, adult/subadult Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*, northwest Negev, Israel, November 1992; three right-hand plates, Steppe Eagles *A. nipalensis*, Eilat, Israel, springs 1985-88: top, adult; centre and bottom, immature, probably second-summer (H. Shirihi)

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Identification of Parrot Crossbill The influx of Parrot Crossbills *Loxia pytyopsittacus* into Britain during the late autumn of 1990 gave many observers their first opportunity to test out the identification lessons learned during the previous influx, in 1983-84, and subsequent breeding. In late November 1990, a number of sites in northeast England were found to be holding Parrot Crossbills, and one of these, at Heavygate Farm, Chopwell Woods, Tyne & Wear, presented the opportunity for close-range study and mist-netting. Between 20th November and 5th December, eight individuals were caught and ringed at this site by the Durham Ringing Group and many more were observed at close quarters, sometimes for prolonged periods. The following notes summarise some of our observations, especially where they differ in certain details from previously published information.

Bill In the field, the most useful identification criterion was undoubtedly the size and shape of the bill (particularly well described by Harris *et al.* 1990), especially the bulging lower edge of the lower mandible, and the apparent 'stubbiness' (i.e. the ratio of depth to length) of the bill in relation to the depth of the head, this stubbiness being enhanced by the mandible tips projecting less compared with those of Common Crossbill *L. curvirostra*. Attention has previously been drawn to the obvious pale cutting edges of the mandibles, but this feature should be used only with care as Common Crossbill can also show very obvious pale areas on the mandibles (see plate 109). The shape and extent of the pale area, however, can be distinctive on Parrot Crossbill, tending to expand out from the middle of the cutting edges to form two half-moons, deepest and broadest on the lower mandible, but not usually reaching to the tips of the mandibles (plate 108), whereas those on Common Crossbill, if present, tend to reach the tips (plate 109).



108 & 109. Left, male Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* and, right, male Common Crossbill *L. curvirostra*, Tyne & Wear, December 1990 (Stephen Westerberg)

General shape The head and neck of Parrot Crossbill are massive and, although the length of the head from front to back is not that much greater than on Common Crossbill, its breadth is significantly greater. This gives Parrot Crossbill a much more square-headed shape, appearing especially flat-topped in comparison with Common's more domed crown (some extreme Parrot Crossbill skins examined at the Hancock Museum, Tyne & Wear, had heads almost 33% broader than similar skins of Common). A noticeable feature of the birds at Heavygate, and readily apparent in some of the photographs, was that Parrot Crossbills, in profile, often seemed to possess a

slight but distinct 'forehead step' between the top of the head and the proximal end of the upper mandible. This feature, not usually so apparent on Common Crossbill, is due to the Parrot Crossbill's culmen jutting out more or less horizontally from the forehead area. The arc of Common Crossbill's more rounded head profile runs down relatively smoothly into the more even curve of the culmen, creating a less obvious, or much more subtle, step.

Parrot Crossbill is heavy and 'hulk-like' at its front end, with an extremely muscular neck (this is very obvious to a ringer when one is in his grip), and is thin, relatively weedy, and attenuated at the rear. Common Crossbill presents a much more 'balanced' shape, undoubtedly bulky but, unlike Parrot, not disproportionately so.

Body bulk A feature which we feel has been too quickly dismissed in the past (though it was highlighted by Millington & Harrap 1991), and which is the first thing likely to draw the observer's eye to a single Parrot Crossbill in a flock of Commons, is the marked size difference between the two species. Catley & Hursthouse (1985) mentioned that Parrot Crossbills have been noted as appearing some 10% larger than Common Crossbills, although, from our small sample, we consider this perhaps an understatement. The smallest Parrot Crossbill caught at Chopwell was 25% more massive than the largest Common Crossbill trapped at the same site, and it should be noted that the latter was a large individual, with a wing length greater than the upper limit given by Svensson (1984) for the species. The largest Parrot Crossbill handled at Heavygate Farm was over 40% heavier than this Common Crossbill. This is a significant difference in bulk, being greater than the average difference between Blackbird *Turdus merula* and Song Thrush *T. philomelos* or between Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* and Coal Tit *P. ater*. It must be remembered, however, that the Parrot Crossbills at Chopwell may have been settled for some time, allowing them to replenish fat and body muscle, which would be reduced in a newly arrived coastal migrant and therefore reduce its total bulk. A much wider variation in mass was noted for both crossbill species on Fair Isle, Shetland, where migrants do not have such a ready supply of food as was available in Chopwell Woods. So, although a large degree of caution does need to be exercised when using size as an identification feature, it is probably more useful than has been stated previously.

Biometrics Earlier works have claimed that Parrot Crossbill looks 'long-winged' in comparison with Common Crossbill. While this may be the case in some instances, it is by no means the whole truth. Indeed, from our experience of Common Crossbills handled and observed during that species' influx in 1990, we would suggest that under certain circumstances, and with certain populations of Common, the reverse may be true. The longest-winged Common handled at Fair Isle Bird Observatory during the 1990 influx had a wing of 107 mm, well outside Svensson's (1984) published range for this species and equivalent to the longest-winged of the Parrot Crossbills handled at Heavygate. Birds with such long wings, with shorter tails and lacking the bulk of Parrot Crossbill appear proportionately much longer-winged than Parrot, as the wingtip falls much farther down the tail than on the latter.

Some large crossbills caught on the East Coast during the period of the influx were reported (W. E. Oddie *in litt.*) to be causing identification problems

in the hand. These difficulties no doubt arose from Svensson's (1984) emphasis on measurement of key characteristics such as bill depth and wing length. Too firm a reliance on biometrics, however, may indeed cause problems when extremely large Common Crossbills, or small Parrot Crossbills, are encountered. An individual trapped on Fair Isle in September 1990 is a case in point: its bill depth of 13 mm was too small for Parrot Crossbill and its wing measured only 104 mm (3 mm shorter than that of the largest Common Crossbill measured at the Observatory that summer, and equalling the wing length of the longest-winged Common caught at Heavygate); the 'sinusoidal' lower-mandible shape, the thick-necked bulk of the bird and several other characteristics, however, led to identification as Parrot Crossbill (P. V. Harvey & N. J. Riddiford *in litt.*). Moreover, Alan Knox has commented (*in litt.*) that measurements which he took of a range of Parrot Crossbills trapped in Finland in 1984 showed that the 1990 Fair Isle individual was not that small-billed, but was within the expected range of bill depth for the species as sampled by him.

Plumage We did not find plumage features very helpful in separating the two species, both of which seem to be very variable. Parrot Crossbill does tend to have duller tones in its plumage, and the facial area of those at Heavygate seemed particularly grey in appearance. Males trapped at Heavygate exhibited greyish lores, with a variable grey mask extending back through (and around) the eye and with more extensive grey on the ear-coverts. All of the Parrot Crossbills caught showed much grey on the ear-coverts, often extending around and onto the hindneck to form a greyish collar. Some female Common Crossbills can appear very grey, although males tend not to have anywhere near the amount of grey shown by Parrot Crossbills. The subtle plumage tones were much less obvious in the field, although the grey on the lores of male Parrot Crossbills often extended back onto the ear-coverts as a 'swathe of grey', which could be evident in good light. All of those handled at Heavygate were first-years, and it is unknown how these plumage features might change in relation to each other with age.

Voice In our limited experience, the distinctive metallic and echoing 'chyioop' note of Parrot Crossbill was diagnostic. A wide range of crossbill vocalisations was heard at Heavygate, but, on every occasion when this particular call was heard, subsequent examination of the birds proved them to be Parrot Crossbills.

Concluding remarks Identification in the field is obviously difficult, and will remain so no matter how refined the identification criteria become. Large-billed, long-winged Commons could easily be interpreted as 'runt' Parrot Crossbills. It is then that the bill shape, lower-mandible structure and bulk should separate them.

Examination of the crossbills handled at Heavygate suggested that a feature of the wing formula may help in separating the two species in the hand: all of the Parrot Crossbills exhibited a much deeper, more clearly defined and longer emargination on the fifth primary than was shown by the Common Crossbills. Examination of a small number of skins of both species at the Hancock Museum, however, failed to prove this a reliable feature.

This contribution has been written by us on behalf of the Durham Ringing

Group. We should like to thank Paul Harvey and Robin Ward for reading through early drafts of this note and for their subsequent useful comments, and especially Paul for providing much useful information from the Fair Isle Bird Observatory files.

K. BOWEY and S. S. WESTERBERG
3 Alloy Terrace, Highfield, Rowlands Gill NE39 2ND

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Common Crossbills drinking seawater On 17th July 1991, on Fair Isle, Shetland, I observed a flock of ten Common Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* on a low cliff. After a few minutes, they dropped below me on to a beach of large pebbles, landing close to the shoreline. To my surprise, one began to drink from the sea, and within the next minute all moved forwards to the outermost pebbles and did likewise; several dipped their bills into the sea at least twice and gave every appearance of drinking. None showed any obvious signs of distress such as bill-wiping or head-shaking, but the flock took flight within one to two minutes of landing on the beach. I have not seen passerines drinking from the sea before. Normally, drinking at such a site on Fair Isle would have been impossible because of swell, but on this occasion the sea was flat calm, the calmest observed for many years. Inexperience, however, was probably the major factor, since all ten crossbills were still in juvenile plumage.

NICK RIDDIFORD

Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland ZE2 9JU

Dr Ian Newton has commented that 'crossbills commonly eat salt, when it has been sprayed on roads in icy weather, and also regularly visit piles of salted grit at roadsides. Some other finches (Fringillidae) that feed on conifer seeds do the same. In Quebec, I have seen many Common and Two-barred Crossbills *L. leucoptera* dead on roadsides, having been struck by cars when coming down to eat salt.' EDS



Announcement

'Birds of Fair Isle': SPECIAL OFFER Nick Dymond's definitive book (see review *Brit. Birds* 85: 315) is now available POST FREE through British BirdShop for £5.95 (published price £11.95). Please order using the form on pages ix & x.



Major RSPB Marine Life Campaign

SERIOUSLY CONCERNED that the seas around our island are suffering from neglect and mismanagement, the RSPB, in launching its Marine Life Campaign, says urgent action is needed to protect the most important areas for wildlife and promote the sustainable use of the sea's resources. With voluntary actions to safeguard marine biodiversity being inadequate, the Society is calling on the Government to produce legally enforceable measures to ensure that the sea's resources are used in sustainable ways.

More than seven million seabirds, including Puffins *Fratercula arctica*, Northern Gannets *Morus bassanus*, Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* and Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii*, depend on the seas around the UK for survival, relying on a thriving diversity of marine wildlife, especially fish. Our seas are also important for dolphins, porpoises and basking sharks *Cetorhinus maximus*.

In its document, *Seas: the Opportunity*, the RSPB lists 58 of the most important seabird sites around the UK coast identified to date. Only two Marine Nature Reserves have been designated in 13 years since the Wildlife and Countryside Act was passed, and existing powers in these areas do not control all the activities which damage marine wildlife.

The RSPB believes that the Government is unable to meet its international commitments under the EC Birds Directive and the EC Habitats and Species Directive using the voluntary approach, and is pressing for a new system with legal backing to safeguard key areas.

BTO will host 'Young Ornithologists of the Year' presentations

We are delighted to announce that the presentations to the three winners of the title Young Ornithologists of the Year (see *Brit. Birds* 87: 199, 341) will take place at about 5.15 p.m. on Saturday 3rd December 1994 at the BTO's Annual Conference at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire.

Come to the Rutland Fair!

The British Birdwatching Fair is at Rutland Water from Friday 19th to Sunday 21st August. The BB stand is no. M2/31 (no. 31 in marquee no. 2). Come and say 'Hello'.

Antarctic whale sanctuary

At the request of Greenpeace, the French Government proposed to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) that a whale sanctuary be set up right around Antarctica. This proposal was passed at the IWC's recent meeting in Mexico, establishing 'for ever' a safe haven for 80%-90% of the world's remaining whales. Marvellous news!

The next main target is to persuade Norway to stop commercial whaling. Greenpeace reports that Norwegian whalers killed 226 minke whales (lesser rorquals) *Balaenoptera acutorostrata* last year. These are whales—including pregnant females—which migrate past the coasts of Britain and Ireland.

If you want to support Greenpeace in its anti-whaling work or want to find out more, send a donation or write to Greenpeace, FREEPOST ND944, Northampton NN3 6BR.

New Honorary Subscriber



Roger Tory Peterson

We are delighted to announce the addition of this very famous name to the select ranks of our Honorary Subscribers.

Roger Tory Peterson has been an ordinary *BB* subscriber for many years. We had intended to announce his election as an Honorary Subscriber at the same time as that of Guy Mountfort (*Brit. Birds* 87: 302), but a transatlantic postal lapse foiled this plan. Now, however, Dr Peterson has confirmed to us: 'I am honored to accept the invitation to become an Honorary Subscriber to *British Birds* particularly inasmuch as my co-authors, Phil Hollom and Guy Mountfort, as well as the others, are so designated. So, with delight I accept.'

We believe that history will recognise that

the field-guide illustrations by Dr Peterson had a unique influence on the development of ornithology in the twentieth century, and that the century can be split and categorised as pre-Peterson and post-Peterson. Those of us long enough in the tooth to have first-hand experience of the frequent identification blunders made in the pre-Peterson era can testify to the fantastic impact made by the publication of the first accurate, complete and well-illustrated field guides, such as that in Europe by Collins Natural History of Peterson, Mountfort & Hollom (1954).

It is *our* honour that all three authors have agreed to become Honorary Subscribers.

The other nine current Honorary Subscribers are I. J. Ferguson-Lees, P. A. D. Hollom, Guy Mountfort, E. M. Nicholson, Major R. F. Ruttledge, Robert Spencer, Dr P. O. Swanberg, Professor Dr K. H. Voous and D. I. M. Wallace. (EDS)

Cyprus ban holds

The response from birders and conservationists throughout Europe was fantastic. Large numbers wrote to the Cyprus President, tourist board and embassies throughout Europe. The Cypriot government reinstated a ban on the spring hunting of migrant birds passing through the island (July's lead story, *Brit. Birds* 87: 339).

We can never know if the ban was the result of pressure from the conservationists, the potential problems to the tourist industry, the desire to comply with EC legislation prior to potential membership, or a strong feeling for the conservation of migratory birds.

Whatever the reason, it happened, and we should all be grateful. How about writing again (or for the first time perhaps) stating how pleased you are that the ban was introduced and what a benefit it will be to the migratory birds, not just of Cyprus, but for all of Europe. Send your congratulations to President Glafios Clerides, Presidential Palace, Nicosia, Cyprus.

BLOWS goes

Do not worry! The British Library of Wildlife Sounds (BLOWS) is continuing its work, but under a new name: the 'National Sound Archive Wildlife Section' (NSA).

The address to write to is National Sound Archive, Wildlife Section, 29 Exhibition Road, London SW7 2AS; phone 071-412-7402/3; fax 071-412-7441.

Young wildlife artists' bursary awards

Lloyds Private Banking Ltd and the Society of Wildlife Artists have announced the winners of their bursary awards, which were established in 1993 to encourage and support talented young wildlife artists: Darren Woodhead (West Yorkshire), Gerard Turley (Glasgow), Kendra Haste (London) and Simon John Patient (Essex). The winners' work will be displayed at the SWLA's prestigious annual exhibition at the Mall Galleries, London, during 28th July to 12th August 1994.

Flugsnappare

Is your Swedish better than your German? Then you will want to consult *Vår Fågelvärld* vol. 53, no. 3, where Krister Mild's work on the identification of black-and-white flycatchers *Ficedula* (noted earlier in relation to *Limicola* 7: 222-276) occupies nine of the issue's 50 pages.

VF is published by the Sveriges Ornitologiska Förening, Box 14219, 104 40 Stockholm, Sweden.

Cleveland Bird Fayre

Sunday 14th August 1994 is the day. Coatham Marsh Nature Reserve, Redcar, Cleveland, is the place.

Everyone is welcome, so go along! For more details, ring Simon Jones on Middlesbrough (0642) 253716.

Bird conservation

The 1994 Annual Conference of the British Ornithologists' Union, which was attended by 220 ornithologists and conservationists from 23 countries (six continents), and was organised by the BOU, the RSPB, the JNCC, the WWT and the BTO (see *Brit. Birds* 87: 344), concluded with the drafting of 'A message to influence the role and direction of ornithology and conservation, to the year 2000 and beyond'.

The full seven-page agreed statement will be published in the symposium volume of *Ibis*, but the 16-point Summary is given below. As the statement says: 'The conclusions and recommendations are addressed to all academic, governmental and non-governmental organisations at local, national and international levels that are working to promote the conservation of biodiversity, as well as to all agencies, including policy-makers, industry, funding agencies and professional institutions, both within and outside the UK, whose decisions will have an impact on the science undertaken and the effectiveness of conservation action.'

1. Birds are hugely popular and the public demands their conservation.

2. Ornithology has made a major contribution to nature conservation by virtue of this popular support. The value of birds as environmental indicators has been hugely enhanced by voluntary data collection on a wide scale over many years.

3. Habitat loss and degradation are the main causes of species' declines, even though other factors may contribute to extinction. More research should address the causes of decline at an early stage, while the chance of recovery is highest.

4. The ranges of bird species should be maintained, both to avoid the risk of local or wider extinction and to enable people to enjoy them as part of their normal experience.

5. To maintain species' ranges, conservation must be incorporated in policies affecting the wider countryside and the sea. This is as important as managing protected areas.

6. The management of protected areas can be successful only in the context of sympathetic management of the surrounding countryside.

7. The Biodiversity Convention requires countries to produce national conservation plans and strategies. This offers ornithologists an unprecedented opportunity to contribute to conservation by developing explicit objectives

and specific targets for the maintenance (or restoration) of numbers and distributions of species, and of extent and quality of habitats. Targets should be ambitious but realistic and be sufficiently precise as to be testable.

8. Predictive models have the potential to support conservation advice, but traditional natural history studies have proved vital in the past and theory is not yet ready to replace them.

9. Detailed ecological research with long data runs is the ideal basis for conservation action. But urgency demands shorter studies, informed by ecological intuition and knowledge, and reaching specific recommendations for action.

10. Conservation action should be treated as an experiment so that techniques can be improved progressively. This applies both to the management of nature reserves and to habitat management stemming from broader policy measures, for example in Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

11. Monitoring across a wide species base is essential because the threats to wildlife are unpredictable. Birds have proven to be successful indicators because they are highly visible; are enthusiastically counted by volunteers; and respond to a wide variety of environmental impacts.

12. Threshold levels, indicating the normal variations (for instance in numbers or breeding success), are needed to trigger prompt remedial action.

13. Monitoring, research and conservation action all need to be taken forward internationally. Integrated and common approaches enable exchange of data and information, and reinforce national actions across the range.

14. Existing data need to be made more accessible by greater collaboration and openness, and by use of computerisation.

15. Ornithologists need to build stronger partnerships, both with other biologists and with decision-makers across the range of land-use and economic policy. This will be helped by better communication built on clear but simple messages for non-biologists.

16. The training of future ecologists will need to take account of the wide range of skills required by the expanding discipline of conservation.



Nest-recording record

The BTO's Nest Record Scheme reached a new peak in 1993, with 34,824 cards returned (from 427 individual contributors and 89 groups) by the end of May 1994.

This long-running scheme needs even more helpers (you do not have to be a BTO member to contribute). If you are willing to record precise details of the nests which you find, you can obtain a free copy of the latest newsletter, *Nest Record News*, and a 'Starter Pack' for new Nest Recorders. Late-summer nests may be under-recorded, so now is *not* too late to help with the 1994 breeding season.

The team in charge comprises Humphrey Crick, Caroline Dudley and David Glue. Write to the Nest Records Unit, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU, or phone Thetford (0842) 750050.

Children join the Green Task Force

Birdathon '94, run throughout this summer by the Young Ornithologists' Club, involves children taking part in a range of sponsored activities from birdwatching to collecting litter.

The activities aim to help the YOC to raise £25,000 to buy Heron's Marsh, a wetland site near Norwich, Norfolk, which is potentially important for Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus*, swallowtail butterflies *Papilio machaon* and marsh orchids *Dactylorhiza*.

The project goes on until the end of August, and all children taking part will be entered in a draw to win a multimedia computer. So, if you know of a child who might want to take part, write off now for a sponsor form, to YOC Birdathon '94, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. Better still, if you know of an interested youngster who would like to join the Young Ornithologists' Club . . .

Birds-of-prey registration changes

On 25th April 1994, Environment Minister Robert Atkins made an Order under Section 22 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act that removed several species from the list that required their registration if kept in captivity. These included Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* and Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, together with several non-native birds-of-prey. In addition to the rarer British species, it will continue to be necessary to register, if held in captivity, several of the world endangered species (e.g.

Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus*, Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* and Lesser Kestrel *F. naumanni*.

Concern had been expressed by various conservation bodies, but the Government seems to have reached a compromise. Perhaps more worrying is the ability legally to move captive birds freely within the EC, and the apparent resurgence in the cage-bird trade, both within Europe and on its Asiatic borders. There is clearly a need for another major international campaign on this front.

Ornithological Society of India

In 1991, during the Garhwal Symposium, suggestions were put forward concerning the formation of an Ornithological Society of India. It would provide a forum bringing together all those interested in the Indian avifauna, give impetus to research, and help evolve conservation and management strategies for Indian birds. From among the original proposers, Dr Asha Chandola Saklani was elected Secretary General. Zafar Futehally has accepted the post of President and eight Regional Secretaries have been appointed.

As its first major venture, the OSI organised the First National Seminar, on 'Changing Scenario of Bird Ecology and Conservation in India', held in Bangalore in November 1993.

Over 100 papers were submitted and nearly 250 delegates attended from throughout India. The seminar was reported in *Newsletter for Birdwatchers*, which is, for the time being, serving as a mouthpiece for OSI. The *Newsletter*, edited by Zafar Futehally and published six times a year, is in its thirty-fourth year, and the annual overseas subscription is US\$25. Subscriptions can be paid to the Newsletter, c/o Navbarath Enterprises, Seshadripuram, Bangalore 560 020.

For further information about the Ornithological Society of India, contact the Secretary General, PO Box 45, Garhwal University, Srinagar, UP 246 174, India. (Contributed by Andrew Robertson)

Roadside plants

At a time when most wildlife conservationists are expressing reservations about the nation's road and transport policies, the Department of Transport is to be applauded for its efforts in both creating and restoring roadside wildlife habitats. It announced recently that the verges of the M1 motorway between London and Leeds are home to no fewer than 384 species of plants, some of them national rarities.

'BIRDING Plus'

This is the title of the first UK video magazine for birdwatchers. It will appear quarterly, and the prelaunch publicity tells us that 'the *BIRDING Plus* video will take the birding magazine into a new era.'

The first issue features The Hawk and Owl Trust in its Silver Jubilee year; a birding-holiday trip to Antarctica; reviews of the latest books, products and birding videos; a video competition with prizes (match the call to the bird); and the latest video footage and stills of recent sightings. With each video there will be a free information booklet, a competition entry form and a car sticker.

The normal selling price will be £12.99, but the first issue of *BIRDING Plus* will be on sale at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water during 19th-21st August 1994 for just £10.00, with £1.00 going to the 'Project Halmahera' appeal.

For more information, contact Colin R. Casey on Boston (0205) 352516.

'Disturbance to Waterfowl on Estuaries'

'Kentish Plovers [*Charadrius alexandrinus*] and tourists—competitors on sandy coasts?', 'Disturbance of foraging Knots [*Calidris canutus*] by aircraft in the Dutch Wadden Sea', and 'Experimental wildlife reserves in Denmark'. These are three of the 15 papers in a 106-page Special Issue produced by the Wader Study Group. Another relates to the effects of disturbance from bait-digging and wildfowling at Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve. For £15 (incl. p&p) you can obtain your own copy from the RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Eilat Festival

The International Birdwatching Center Eilat is organising its 6th Spring Migration Festival, during 19th-25th March 1995, with guided visits to the main migration 'hot spots', such as the Kibbutz fields, the Yotvata oasis and the Mountains of the Moon, desert tours by four-wheel-drive vehicles and organised trips to see local specialities and spectacles, such as the arrival of Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* to drink at dusk. The ringing station will be open to visitors daily during 07.00-08.30. A two-day Negev tour follows, during 24th-25th March.

For full details, write to Dr Reuven Yosef, Director, Att. Spring Festival, IBCE, PO Box 774, Eilat, Israel.

Three new reserves

In May, English Nature and the Duncombe Park Estate jointly opened a new National Nature Reserve at historic Duncombe Park, Helmsley, North Yorkshire. The new reserve, covering 90 ha, is unique in being the first National Nature Reserve in the north of England specifically conserving insects which live in dead and dying wood. Although primarily designated for its invertebrate interest, the woodland also contains a wealth of birdlife, including—not unexpectedly with all that dead wood around!—all three species of woodpecker.

Glen Affric—one of Scotland's largest remaining areas of native forest—has recently been designated a Caledonian Forest Reserve. The new designation means that the area will be managed totally for its heritage, environmental and recreational value. The remaining introduced conifer species will be removed and natural regeneration of trees and shrubs encouraged. The management plan will also concentrate on helping the area's typical wildlife

species, such as Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*, pine marten *Martes martes* and red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*.

The Summer 1994 issue of *IWC News* announces the establishment of Kilcolman Bog, near Buttevant, Co. Cork, as a National Nature Reserve. This limestone marsh is a regular winter refuge for up to 30 species of waterbird, is the only place in Co. Cork where Greenland White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons flavirostris* winter, and is also noted for its unique flora. The northern half of the reserve is owned by Mrs Margaret Ridgway, who, with her late husband Richard and with help from neighbouring landowners and the IWC, managed the bog as a voluntary wildfowl reserve for 25 years. That, together with the southern half, which belongs to the Office of Public Works, now looks set to have a secure future, with facilities for schools, research students and hides for visitors.

Sponsor a species for the 'European Breeding Bird Atlas'

Fieldworkers from every European country have recorded the distribution of all species of breeding birds across the whole continent. From their observations, maps have been prepared on a 50×50-km grid and a database has been set up concerning population figures and trends. These materials are the basis for the first pan-European Bird Atlas—a collaborative project of ornithologists all over Europe.

The project has been managed by the European Ornithological Atlas Working Group (EOAWG) of the European Bird Census Council (EBCC), which is made up of delegates from every European country. The database has been set up jointly with BirdLife International (formerly the ICBP) so that the information can readily be used for conservation purposes. The well-known British publishers T. & A. D. Poyser have agreed to publish the Atlas, more than 250 specialists from 22 countries are writing the texts, more than 20 artists from 12 countries are preparing vignettes to illustrate the book, and Prof. Dr Karel Voous has written a foreword.

Funding is required to finish the extensive task of editing the Atlas and preparing the material for publication. Organisations or individuals can help by sponsoring one or

more species. The name (or logo) of the sponsor will be given at the end of each species account.

The minimum rate for sponsorship is £250 (or DM675) per species for individual sponsors and £500 (or DM1,350) for organisations.

Most European bird clubs and societies in Europe have a bird species as their logo. Surely they will wish to sponsor their species in the first bird atlas for Europe? Since there are about 450 bird species within Europe, there should be enough left over for individual sponsorship.

What can you do to support the EBCC in its task of publishing the *European Breeding Bird Atlas*? Choose a species from among the 450 European breeding species and send your donation to the account of EOAWG, 5128 08-503 Postbank Köln (BLZ 37010050), with details to the EOAWG Chairman, Dr Goetz Rheinwald, Adenauerallee 160, 53113 Bonn, Germany.

In case your preferred species has already been chosen by someone else, please indicate your second and third choices. If all of your choices have already been selected, the EBCC will use your donation for an unsponsored species unless you instruct otherwise.

Bird haul in Malta

The Times of Malta for 5th May 1994 started an article with the opening paragraph: 'A policeman was attacked yesterday during a raid on a building near Safi which uncovered a record haul of illegally stuffed and frozen birds.' The haul consisted of 1,400 frozen birds packed into eight chest freezers and a further 400 stuffed birds. The variety of species involved ranged from the smallest passerines to herons and vultures. Amongst the frozen birds were a variety of dogs, bats, piglets and snakes.

Taxidermy in Malta is subject to a licence and not only were protected species involved, but the subsequent preservation was also illegal. In addition, during the course of the raid, police officers seized tonnes of illegal high-calibre pellets.

The Malta Ornithological Society is to be congratulated and supported in its campaign to stamp out illegal taxidermy in the islands. It is a brave act to make an appeal for support by asking members of the public to contact them if they have any information.

The Society can be supported at PO Box 498, Valletta, Malta.

Burt L. Monroe Jr

With great regret, we must report that, after a long fight against cancer, Burt Monroe died on 14th May 1994. His name will be known best on this side of the Atlantic for his co-authorship (with Charles G. Sibley) of *Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World* (1990) and *A World Checklist of Birds* (1993), and his contributions to ornithology were greatest on the world scale and in the Nearctic, particularly his native USA. He was Chairman of the AOU's influential List Committee, and was President of the AOU during 1990-92. He was also the Co-ordinator of the committee appointed by the International Ornithological Congress to recommend standard English names for all the world's birds: a huge, thankless job requiring enormous patience and tact. Few people could have attempted such a task, and even fewer would have done so voluntarily and unpaid, and have achieved such success; sadly, the task is unfinished and awaits another volunteer.

Burt Monroe inspired respect, but was completely approachable and friendly. We send our sincere condolences to his wife and family. (JTRS)

Authors and Artists for Conservation

Authors and book illustrators can help to save tropical forests, coral reefs and other endangered habitats very easily, merely by assigning their PLR (Public Lending Rights) in just one (or more!) of their books to 'Authors and Artists for Conservation', which was launched on 30th June by the World Wide Land Conservation Trust.

It genuinely takes less than five minutes to do this, since the WWLCT will supply the forms and do all the paperwork for you. For details, write to John A. Burton, WWLCT, The Old Mission Hall, Sibton Green, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 2JY.

Copeland's 40th birthday

Congratulations to Copeland Bird Observatory, which this year celebrates 40 years of operations on Copeland Island, Co. Down.

Large numbers of volunteers have visited the island each year between April and October, gathering an impressive data base on its Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus*. The island can also claim fame for the only Palearctic record of Fox Sparrow *Zonotrichia iliaca*, back in 1961. Stories reach us of what may have been an Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae* there in May this year, a very nice birthday present.

For further information, please contact Neville McKec, 67 Temple Rise, Templepatrick, Co. Antrim BT39 0AG.

Lesser Flamingos and Lake Natron

It is perhaps surprising that there is still a lot we do not know about the life history of the Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*. It is a large and conspicuous bird, has featured on numerous TV programmes and certainly numbers a world population of millions. It is, however, still a mystery bird. We know little about its migrations and movements, we know little of what triggers its impressive breeding colonies into action, and we are not quite sure of the size of the world population.

What is known is that Lake Natron in northern Tanzania (just south of the Kenya border) is the only site in the world where large numbers of Lesser Flamingos breed frequently and successfully. A remote site, so it would be reasonable to expect it to be secure, but the Kenya Power and Lighting Company is planning to develop a hydro-electric plant on the main stream that feeds the lake. In addition, the Tanzanian government is considering a soda-extraction plant at Lake Natron, together with all the necessary infrastructure.

A workshop on Lesser Flamingos in Kenya in November 1993 drew up a series of 12 recommendations that those who took part are urging to be implemented. For details, see *IWRB News* (No. 11, January 1994), or contact the Flamingo Research Group, La Tour du Valat, Le Sambuc, 13200 Arles, France.

There are several major sites with serious conservation problems around the world, ranging from tropical rain-forests in South America to the marshes of southern Iraq. It seems that Lake Natron is another one to add to the list.

Crossbill ID is easy

For the complications of separating Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pyropsittacus* from Common Crossbill *L. curvirostra* see pages 398-401, but for the much easier task of identifying Scottish Crossbill *L. scotica*, see Derek Gray's summary, below, taken by permission from *Wingbeat*, the

quarterly newsletter sent to all YOC and RSPB members aged 14-19. (For details of YOC membership, write to Julian Hughes, YOC, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.)

COMPARE & CONTRAST

No. 1 : THE SCOTTISH CROSSBILL / THE COMMON CROSSBILL

	SCOTTISH CROSSBILL	COMMON CROSSBILL
GENERAL REMARKS	FLIES OVER TALL TREES WITH A SINGLE WINGBEAT. FASTER THAN A BULLET.	FLIES INTO TREES. SLOWER THAN AN EPISODE OF "ELDORADO".
CHARACTERISTICS	BEAK HAS A GRIP LIKE IRON AND A POINT THAT COULD CUT DIAMONDS. LOOKS BURLY AND MEAN.	RATHER PATHETIC AND WEEDY LOOKING, I'M AFRAID.
NATURAL COMPETITORS	PINE MARTENS, WILDCATS, AND OTHER VICIOUS, DROOLING MEATEATERS.	BUNNY RABBITS.
HABITAT	THE WILD, UNTAMED, ANCIENT CALEDONIAN PINE FOREST.	SISSY WOODS AND PLANTATIONS.
TO SUM UP	HE'S FROM SCOTLAND!	HE ISN'T!



(PS The cartoonist, who is Scottish, retains the right to be completely and utterly biased!)

Know any good birders aged 21 or younger?

If you know a birdwatcher aged 21 or less who you think might be good enough to win the title Young Ornithologist of the Year, please encourage him or her to enter the competition. Prizes and titles will be awarded within three age categories: 21 or under, 16 or under and 12 or under.

The prizes for the three winners are worth over £2,800, and all it takes to enter is a good field notebook (see *Brit. Birds* 87: 199 & 341 for the rules and details of the prizes).

Fischmöwe

The latest issue of the German journal *Limicola* (vol. 8, no. 2, April 1994) includes accounts of the first and second German records of Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* (first, February 1991; second, February-March 1992 and February-March 1994) and a 15-page ID paper by Peter Barthel with a score of photographs, mostly in colour. As with all issues of *Limicola*, there are captions and detailed summaries in English.

The address of *Limicola* is Über dem Salzgraben 11, OT Drüber, D-37574 Einbeck, Germany.

'Bird Watching' highlights

EXCLUSIVE—the official British Birdwatching Fair showguide comes free with the August issue of *Bird Watching*.

Warblers in focus—Dave Cottridge picks his favourite *Sylvia* warbler images.

Birding by boat—the best boats from which to see birds, from organised pelagics to cross-Channel ferries, plus John McLoughlin's seabird-migration maps.

A selection of the top photographs from the recent *British Birds* Bird Photograph of the Year competition.

Current Chairman of the British Birds Rarities Committee, Rob Hume, answers recent criticism levelled at it by its former Chairman, Ian Wallace.

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Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'



Monthly marathon



Entrants provided the following answers to the first three stages in the seventh Marathon:

PLATE 60: Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* (60%), Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* (31%), Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* (7%), and other vultures (2%).

PLATE 72: Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* (83%), Grey Phalarope *P. fulicarius* (16%), and Wilson's Phalarope *P. tricolor* (1%).

PLATE 80: Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* (67%), Hedge Accentor *P. modularis* (8%). Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus* (8%), Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* (8%), and other species (9%).

The plates showed: Griffon Vulture photographed in Spain in July 1985 by Bart Vercruysse, Red-necked Phalarope photographed in Sweden in August 1978 by Stellan Hedgren, and Alpine Accentor photographed in France in June 1988 by G. P. Catley.

The fifth stage is provided by plate 110, on page 410.

110. Seventh 'Monthly marathon', fifth stage: photo no. 98. Identify the species. Read the rules on pages 25-26 of the January 1993 issue, then send in your answer on a post-card to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th September 1994



For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF, or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 20th June to 17th July 1994

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*
Flamborough Head (Humberside), 16th July.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Up to four,
Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), late June to 17th July.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
South Ferriby (Humberside), 10th-13th July.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*
Kilcoole (Co. Wicklow), 13th July;
Tacumshin, 13th-15th July.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Montrose Basin (Tayside), 13th-17th July.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* Lady's Island Lake (Co. Wexford), 11th July.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*
Llandegfedd Reservoir, Pontypool (Gwent), 15th-17th July.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*
Portland (Dorset), 15th July.



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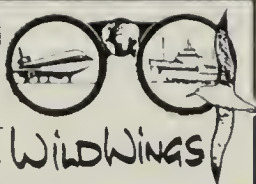
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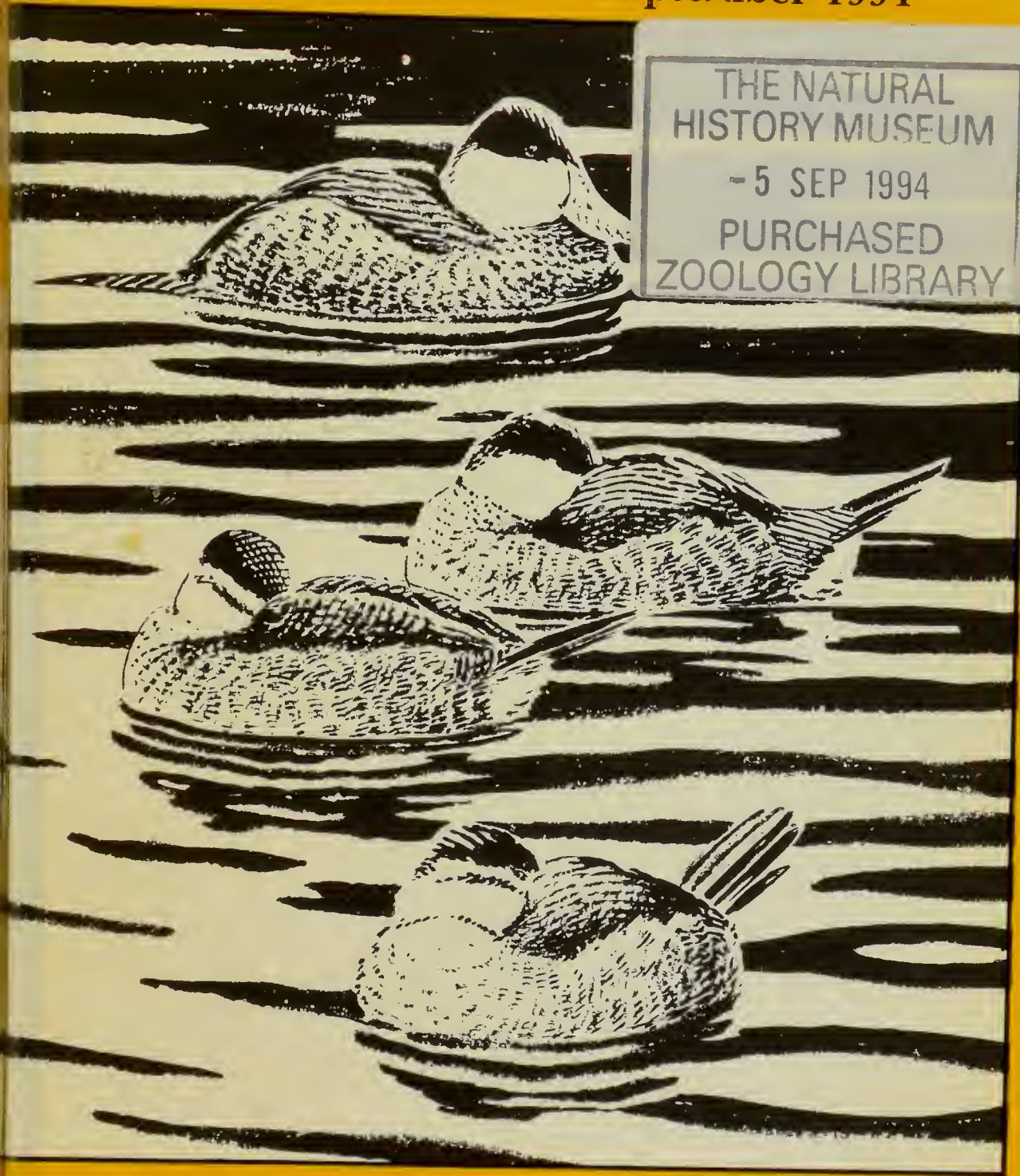
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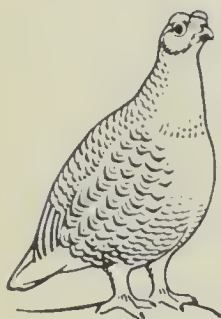
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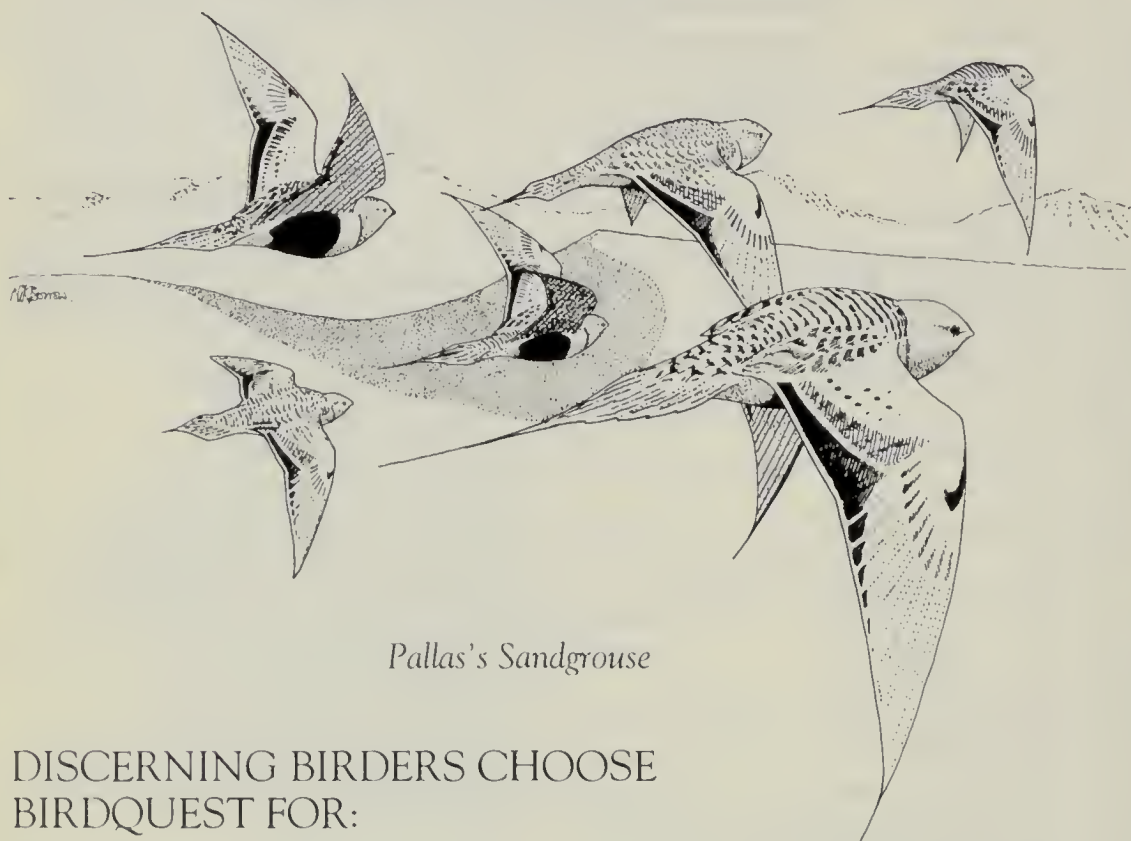
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Migration of a typical migrant

A synopsis of current knowledge

Peter Berthold

From the currently available findings on various aspects of bird migration, the following general picture of the course and control of movements of a typical migrant becomes apparent. For clarity, the conditions prevalent during the first outward migration of a typical long-distance migrant are portrayed using, as an example, a *Sylvia* warbler migrating from western Central Europe to central and southern Africa.

This paper has been adapted from the synopsis chapter in Prof. Berthold's *Bird Migration: a general survey* (1993), by special permission of the author and Oxford University Press.

A few weeks after fledging, the juvenile bird is abandoned by its parents, and at this time also separates from its siblings. The bird is now independent, and will stay on its own until it pairs up with a breeding partner in the vicinity of its home area within about a year. This is, of course, assuming that this bird will survive until then, the probability of which is 30%.

It has to carry out all the preparations for outward migration, as well as for departure and subsequent return migration, completely by itself, initially supported above all by a number of inherited programmes and innate behavioural patterns, as well as by learning processes.

As a long-distance migrant with an early departure time, its entire juvenile development, especially its juvenile moult, is a comparatively accelerated process, setting in at embryonic stages in the egg. As the result of an innate programme, its completion is fast, and feather change and growth show their respective peaks at the beginning of the moulting period, already allowing the bird to prepare for migration during the later stages of moult. If the young bird originates from a late (replacement or second) brood, its juvenile development is considerably further accelerated by the decreasing amount of daylight.

A number of important physiological and behavioural changes have taken place, already, during juvenile moult, as a preparation for the approaching departure. The most important of them are increased food intake (hyperphagia); increased fat production (hyperlipogenesis), as well as a strong reduction of carbohydrate metabolism; and a further adjustment to fat metabolism, including the activation of enzyme systems for the production, transport, storage, and direct utilisation of fat in the breast muscles. This initiates the formation of visceral and subcutaneous fat depots as fuel supplies for the long migration, and will eventually lead to an approximate doubling of body mass. The formation of fat depots is further enhanced by another preprogrammed change, this one of diet, consisting of an increasing intake of fruits and berries rich in carbohydrates, and also by an improved assimilation of ingested food. Furthermore, the large flight muscles, the main organs responsible for flight during migration, may increase in size. The enormous increase in body mass caused by the formation of fat depots and muscle growth may be somewhat compensated for by a reduction in glycogen and water content and by weight loss from other parts of the body. It is likely that a whole range of specific hormones is involved in the control of all these preprogrammed events.

Thus, prepared for the journey, the migrant finally changes its diurnal periodicity simultaneously with its programmed formation of fat depots: it reduces its activity during late afternoon, often resting during this time, and prepares itself for exclusively nocturnal migration stages during the coming months of migration to its winter quarters.

The initiation of departure is also internally (endogenously) controlled. One day, the bird in migratory disposition will receive an appropriate signal from its internal 'annual calendar' to depart on the following night. Towards evening the bird will then perch relatively high in a bush or tree in preparation for departure some time after sunset, registering the sunset point, which provides important reference cues for the direction it must follow. The choice of direction after departure is given by an innate goal-direction programme for the whole journey. But this inherited goal-direction has to be realised by

means of orientation mechanisms (compasses), which must be employed in different ways according to the prevailing environmental situations.

As a primary aid to its orientation, the bird has inherited a magnetic compass, which enables it to use the inclination of the field lines of the Earth's magnetic field for directional orientation. By observing the starry sky during juvenile development it has learned the apparent rotation of the firmament, as well as the fixed position of the North Star and its neighbouring constellations. It is now able to utilise these stars as another compass, on the basis of an innate disposition. It may possibly gain additional directional information from the polarisation pattern of the sky in the region of the sunset point, which it is able to perceive in the range of ultraviolet light.

This is how the bird will finally set off on its first outward migration, about half or three-quarters of an hour after sunset. But, if this time coincides with heavy rain, its departure will probably be delayed until the rain has at least eased off. The first phases of active migration, like many subsequent nocturnal flights, will be of relatively short duration.

After only a few hours, the bird will land at night, and, as its vision is reduced in vegetation close to the ground, the landing will take place in the higher regions of vegetation that are still visible in the dark. At dawn, the bird will make a quick and goal-directed approach towards a suitable resting site close to where it landed. It is guided by a species-specific preference, probably directed primarily towards specific vegetation structures. At this site, it will search for berry-bearing bushes, stay in the vicinity of these, and catch some insects; but it will mainly consume berries and rest for long periods. Since its fat depots are still small, since some of its reserves have been utilised during the nocturnal flight, and since juvenile moult is not yet completed, it is likely to stay at its first stop-over site for several days before setting off on the next short interval of active migration. If the resting area turns out to be rather unsuitable, it will spend the daytime looking for a more suitable site in the surrounding area.

With the completion of juvenile moult and the increase of fat reserves, the migration stages become slightly longer and the resting periods shorter, finally leading to nocturnal migration every night. The migration stages are, however, still confined to a few hours of flight every night, as the average migration speed towards the winter quarters is only about 50-75 km per day. If everything has gone according to the programme, the fat reserves will be optimally developed when the bird reaches the large barriers of the Mediterranean and Sahara, allowing it to cross these quickly, in a few days of constant nocturnal migration.

During its two-month migration, the migrant has gained much experience. As a result of its innate migration programme, the bird, which has been exposed to very variable wind conditions, has chosen flight altitudes with favourable winds, and has probably compensated for lateral wind drift in side-wind conditions by using optical landmarks or acoustic ones such as the calls of other migrants, or by determining wind direction and speed from the turbulences experienced on its body. Initially, it probably used a star-compass for orientation, switching at later stages, when the visible star constellations had changed considerably, to the magnetic compass and, if they are available,

to the use of topographical features, clouds, acoustic landmarks, or maybe even wind as reference cues. During very bad weather conditions, especially gales, rain, or fog, one or another migration stage probably had to be prematurely terminated, for example because the bird was unable to battle through the strong winds or because it became disoriented. In flights over water, the leading line of a stretch of coast may have been of great help in finding a place to land. If the bad weather passed quickly, an interrupted migration stage may have been resumed the same night.

The migrant will possibly not even have noticed the mountain range of the Alps during the early stages of its journey, unless it was drifted southwards by the wind, as its endogenous migrational direction probably led it through lowland Switzerland or France rather than across the mountains. The bird may, however, have perceived the mountain range acoustically as a result of its infra-sound pattern and used it as an acoustic leading line to its left for additional orientation, or may have ignored it as a dark topographical feature. Once it has reached the Iberian peninsula or the coast of northwest Africa, the bird carries out a programmed directional change to the south or south-east, in order to reach Africa and not to be carried out over the open sea. Depending on the course of its migrational programme up to this point, this migration bend either carries the bird south so early that it does not reach the Atlantic at all, but has to cross the more central regions of the Mediterranean and the Sahara, or, if it is carried out over the Atlantic, brings it to land again in the northwestern part of Africa.

If its fat reserves have been diminished as a result of inadequate feeding conditions at the staging areas—for example because of pest-control measures in intensively farmed agricultural areas—or as a result of exceptionally adverse weather conditions during migration, the migrant may be able to steer towards an oasis during its desert crossing. If this oasis offers enough food, the bird is likely to stop over longer than the one day it would usually rest in the desert, in order to replenish its fat reserves.

Once the Mediterranean and the Sahara are left behind, the programmed journey is continued in ever smaller migratory stages until, one day, the development of migrational activity is terminated by the internal clock.

The innate spatio-temporal programme has done its job, and the endogenously controlled vector navigation has 'automatically' led the migrant to its winter quarters. If the course of this programme was not disrupted by genetic or other defects of the bird, or by exceptional circumstances, such as natural disasters, the migrant is now in its species-specific or population-specific wintering area, to which its conspecifics have been returning year after year.

If the endogenous migration programme has led the migrant to an inhospitable resting area, it can develop facultative migratory activity, by means of which the bird can search for an appropriate place in the immediate or surrounding areas either during the day or at night. This plasticity can be maintained well into the period of winter moult, and allow the bird to find new habitats repeatedly, or even to undertake nomadic movements in the wintering areas, if, for example, food resources are in short supply as a result of drought.

This first outward migration has taken between three and five months

altogether. This long period of time has afforded a high degree of safety to the inexperienced migrant through the smooth running of the endogenous migration programme, which handles the demands of coping physically with the journey as well as of overcoming the various obstacles.

Return migration in spring requires about one-third less time than outward migration. The returning migrant has gained experience in migration, and, even more importantly, it knows its goal area (i.e. the familiar area near its birthplace). The migrant is able to steer towards and reach its breeding area by means of as-yet-unknown navigation mechanisms, following a site determination relative to the goal area at the last area of residence in its winter quarters. The return migration to an already familiar area does not necessarily require an endogenous time programme based on many small intervals of active migration over a long period of time, or at least such a programme is not required for the whole journey. Especially when they are close to the familiar breeding area, it may be sensible for birds to migrate sometimes in longer and at other times in shorter stages, as an adaptation to the often very variable environmental conditions found in the spring.

All subsequent migration periods will, for most long-distance migrants, also lead to familiar resting areas which have already been visited. These could, theoretically, be reached more directly by various mechanisms other than a specifically programmed vector navigation. We do not, however, have sufficient knowledge on the course and control of later migration periods; and, therefore, for the time being, our synopsis has to terminate at this stage.

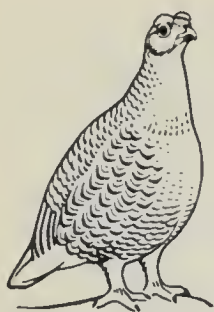
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On 27th September 1969, a tree creeper *Certhia* mist-netted at Dungeness, Kent, proved to be Britain's first fully acceptable Short-toed Tree creeper *C. brachydactyla*. (*Brit. Birds* 69: 508-509)



Reviews

Migrants and Migration. By Peter Holden & Mike Langman. Hamlyn, London, 1994. 48 pages; 23 colour plates; many colour illustrations. ISBN 0-600-57964-6. £6.99.

Aimed at 8-14 year olds, this book introduces the topic of migration to young ornithologists.

Written by Peter Holden in a way that accurately deals with the subject whilst making it very readable, and superbly illustrated by Mike Langman, with some excellent photographs.

Chapters cover every aspect of migration from its 'discovery' over 2,000 years ago, when Aristotle wrote with remarkable accuracy of the migration of Common Cranes *Grus grus*, through to the present-day dangers faced by migrating birds, as well as migration of other animals, migration projects and much more.

Bill Oddie, in his Introduction, admits that he could have avoided making mistakes as a young birder had he had books like this one, which is hardly surprising as, by fact per page, this is one of the best-value bird books around. So, if you are outside the age range for this book, why not buy it for a youngster you know.

DAVID PARNABY

Birds of Australia: a summary of information. 4th edn. By J. D. MacDonald. Illustrated by P. L. Slater. Reed, Chatswood, 1993. 552 pages; 24 colour plates; over 200 line-drawings; over 300 distribution maps. ISBN 0-7301-0385-4. Paperback £25.00.

This is a new edition of a book originally published in 1973. It is a hybrid between a field guide and a handbook, being far too bulky to use in the field, but not containing anything like the amount of detail present in most handbooks. After an interesting chapter on the origin and structure of the Australian avifauna, the bulk of the book is taken up with species accounts. The 24 colour plates by Peter Slater are pleasant enough, though anyone familiar with the artist's more recent work will be able to tell that they were painted more than 20 years ago. The book ends with 300 distribution maps (with between one and five species shown on each map).

The preface acknowledges recent DNA-DNA hybridisation studies, but states that the new phylogeny and classification that has been proposed is unlikely to be generally adopted for some considerable time. This is presumably why the sequence and taxonomy of the species are unchanged in this new edition, but unfortunately some of the English names used are now so out of date as to be thoroughly confusing.

For example, how many birdwatchers who have visited Australia (or even live there) can recognise the following birds: Pediunker, Shoemaker, Yellow-faced Cormorant, Mangrove Heron, Grass Whistleduck, Lotusbird, Large Dotterel, Bartram Sandpiper, Beach Curlew, Red-sided Parrot, Naretha Parrot, Buff-breasted Pitta, Stagemaker? These are the only English names given for these species in the book and for this reason alone I cannot recommend it to anyone birdwatching in Australia. Even as background reading before a trip, it will do little but confuse the reader. If ever there was a strong case for the standardisation of English names, this book is it!

DAVID FISHER

Bird Identification & Fieldcraft. By Ivan Nethercoat & Mike Langman. Hamlyn, London, 1994. 48 pages; 31 colour plates; many colour illustrations. ISBN 0-600-57963-8. £6.99.

This book in the 'Hamlyn Young Ornithologists' Guide' series is excellent for anyone starting birdwatching, whether child or adult, because it has everything you need to know. It is very

detailed about fieldcraft, telling you all the things you should or should not do, what sort of equipment you need, what to wear and how to attract birds. The sections on identification and behaviour are very good as well. They tell you how important it is to get to know common birds first which will help you identify other birds by their characteristic features and their 'jizz'.

There are good diagrams naming the feathers and feather tracts, silhouette drawings of birds and bill shapes, and some paintings and photographs. There is a chapter on how to take field notes and make sketches of birds, another one on what to do to help birds, one on the importance of calls and song for identification, one on what type of birds to look for in different habitats, and another on how the weather affects migrating birds (a very good idea). The book is brilliant. I have never seen a beginners' book quite so detailed. TOM FIELDSSEND

The Fieldfare. By David Norman. Hamlyn, London, 1994. 127 pages; 21 colour plates; 25 line-drawings. ISBN 0-600-57961-1. Paperback £9.99.

This book is one of a new series of approachable monographs that are both attractively presented and attractively priced. There are numerous colour photographs, line-drawings and four full-page paintings. The author's experience of the Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* stems from winter observations. He therefore draws heavily on published material, although the selected bibliography does not include all references named in the text.

Some of the figures and captions were a bit disappointing. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 (breeding and wintering areas and spread of breeding range) would have been much easier to follow in colour (as in Gosler's earlier book in this series, on the Great Tit *Parus major*). The growth curve in Fig. 5.2 should have presented separately the weights of chicks of wild birds and captive birds (no sample sizes given in either case). Fig. 7.2 is confusing in its presentation and does not distinguish between the times of year to which the recoveries refer. Fig. 8.1 would have been more interesting if actual capture dates and complementary data on weather had been incorporated. It is a pity that the author, while quoting extensively the work of others on, say, moult or feeding behaviour, presents few data of his own.

That said, however, there is a great deal to commend in this book. The author has done a good job of pulling together and presenting in a readable way the wealth of often conflicting information on a bird that most know only as a colourful winter visitor. The book is a very ambitious venture by a person who obviously has a great feel for, and dedication to, the subject. The unusual breeding behaviour in particular will raise many questions in the reader's mind about the benefits or otherwise of communal breeding. The range of species that associate with colonies of Fieldfares may also come as a surprise. You will learn a lot from this book. N. PICOZZI

The Birds of Cape May. By David Sibley. New Jersey Audubon Society, Franklin Lakes, 1993. 150 pages; 21 line-drawings. Paperback, \$9.95.

David Sibley has produced an attractive, clear, compact and detailed account of the status and distribution of the 381 species reliably recorded in Cape May County, New Jersey, up to and including 31st December 1992. In line with many other guides of this nature, accounts of the more regular species include notes on habitat preferences, local variations in status, daily maxima, yearly fluctuations, historical changes, unusual records, and identifiable subspecies and forms. A mass of new information is lucidly described. Clear bar-graphs showing the seasonal abundance patterns of all the land-based species are grouped together at the rear; these also present the earliest and latest dates, and this works well.

A separate chapter details each record of the 69 species defined as rarities. Unusual from a British perspective, a 'hypothetical list' gives information on a further 35 or 36 species claimed for, but not accepted on to, the county list. The status of a couple of exotic species precedes a fairly comprehensive and equally unusual 'wish list' detailing possible future additions to the area's already rich avifauna. (It does not include Cave Swallow *Hirundo fulva* or Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina*, nor, hardly surprisingly, North America's first Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*, all added to the county list since the book's deadline.) Two maps and a 'bird-finding' site-guide in the introduction, plus 21 excellent black-and-white line-drawings, add further to the value of this superb booklet—essential not only for anyone intending to visit this world-class birding site, but also for those wishing to know more about migration and vagrancy patterns along the American east coast. PAUL HOLT

King Eiders in Britain and Ireland in 1958-90: occurrences and ageing



D. Suddaby, K. D. Shaw, P. M. Ellis and Keith Brockie, on behalf of the Rarities Committee

The King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* is a widespread breeder across most of the High Arctic coastline and islands of the Holarctic, but is largely absent from Iceland, southern Greenland and arctic Scandinavia. The population from western Siberia and adjacent islands winters from the White Sea to arctic Norway, occasionally to the northern Baltic. South of this area, King Eiders are rare (Madge & Burn 1988).

Within Britain and Ireland, the King Eider is a rare but regular visitor. The majority of records have been in the Shetland, Highland and Grampian regions, though individuals have been seen recently as far south as Cornwall. In almost every case, King Eiders have associated with flocks of Common Eiders *S. mollissima* and remained with these flocks over the years. For the purposes of this paper, it is necessary, therefore, to look at the distribution of Common Eider populations around the coast.

This paper attempts to reassess the occurrences and numbers of King Eiders in Britain and Ireland during 1958-90, based on the distribution of Common Eider populations. We consider that the minimum number of different individuals estimated here is a more realistic total than that of 153 published in 'Rare Birds in Great Britain in 1990' (*Brit. Birds* 84: 463).

Common Eider populations

In Britain and Ireland, Common Eiders are at the southern edge of their European range and are relatively sedentary (Cramp & Simmons 1977; Owen *et al.* 1986). In summer, they are distributed around the coast mainly north of a line from Northumberland to Northern Ireland, although during the winter their distribution is extended farther south, in small numbers, along the east and south coasts of England (Sharrock 1976; Lack 1986).

During the winter, Common Eiders generally form flocks of varying sizes, then during the spring most adults disperse to their breeding grounds, leaving smaller flocks consisting of immatures and non-breeders. The breeding males, often joined by non-breeding individuals, begin flocking again from July onwards, to moult. These flocks can often be very large, with up to 11,000 off Murcar in Grampian, and often exceeding 1,000 individuals at sites elsewhere. By October, the moult is complete and the eiders disperse back to their wintering grounds.

Common Eiders are found around the whole coast of Scotland, but remain as relatively sedentary populations within distinct geographical areas, with infrequent interchange between them (although there is movement within the 'populations' between breeding, moulting and wintering sites). Since 80% of the records of King Eider are from Scotland, only the six Scottish 'populations' of Common Eiders are discussed here.

Numbers refer to areas shown in fig. 1 on page 420.

1. & 2. Shetland and Orkney

Around Shetland, Common Eiders are much more dispersed in winter than during the moulting period. A study of wing-tagged individuals from Linga, Bluemull Sound, showed that those from this area moved throughout Shetland, mainly into Yell Sound and Sullom Voe, but none was reported outwith Shetland (Heubeck 1992).

The possibility of a link between the populations of the two island groups was raised by Jones & Kinnear (1979), but Heubeck (1987, 1993) considered the Shetland population to be largely resident. Evidence against movement between Orkney and Shetland is that there are few reports of Common Eiders seen from the ferry crossing from Fair Isle to Sumburgh Head (Dymond 1991) or of sightings during seawatches of eiders moving to and from the southern tip of Shetland, Fair Isle or North Ronaldsay, and the only ringing recovery is of a breeding female from Fair Isle found dead in Shetland during the MV *Braer* oil spill in January 1993 (Wildlife Response Coordinating Committee *in litt.*). Interchange between the island groups is apparently minimal.

Around Orkney, Common Eiders are much more dispersed during the moulting period than in winter. Although very little is known about the movements of the Orkney population, it is quite possible that there is interchange with the north coast of Scotland. Orkney and the north Highland coast have, therefore, been treated here as a single 'population'.

Fig. 1. Map showing discrete areas where King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis* have occurred in Britain and Ireland during the period 1958-90. Numbers refer to sequence in table 1 and Appendix 1



3. Moray Firth (east Highland to north Grampian coast)

Small numbers breed along the coast, with moult flocks occurring in the Dornoch Firth and off Brora. Large wintering numbers occur within the Moray Firth, Brora to Spey Bay, moving into the area from elsewhere along the coast. The main winter concentration is off the mouth of Loch Fleet (Campbell *et al.* 1986).

4. Grampian/Tayside/Fife/Lothian

Common Eiders breed along most of the coast, with the largest colony at the Sands of Forvie National Nature Reserve, Ythan estuary, Grampian. Generally, eiders move from the Ythan to the moulting area between Blackdog and the Don estuary, concentrating off Murcar, north of Aberdeen, then on to the wintering areas off the Tay and Forth, returning to the Ythan during March and April (Milne 1965; Baillie & Milne 1989). Those that remain to winter on the Ythan are resident throughout the year, although there is some movement into the area of Common Eiders breeding elsewhere and some are known to move to Scandinavia (Baillie & Milne 1989). Common Eiders off Fife are fairly sedentary, although there is some interchange with the Farne Islands (Pounder 1974; Baillie & Milne 1989).

5. Strathclyde/Dumfries & Galloway

Common Eiders form large moult flocks off Ayr and in Loch Ryan, after which they disperse throughout the area, although they are scarce along the Dumfries coastline (Thom 1986).

6. Western Isles

Wing-tagging studies suggest that the population is largely resident (Thom 1986).

Assessing the records

To assess King Eider records, we have used a geographical approach based on Common Eider populations (fig. 1). It was assumed that a King Eider which occurred within a 'population' of Common Eiders stayed within that 'population' unless there was evidence to the contrary. The assessment of numbers becomes more complex when a 'population' holds more than one King Eider, unless they are obviously of different age or sex. Evidence for different individuals could include:

- (i) individuals being seen at different places at the same time,
- (ii) described individual differences, and
- (iii) multiple records from the same place.

Unless there was a good reason, any series of records of a King Eider within a 'population' has been assumed to refer to the same individual, even if there was a considerable time or distance between the sightings. Thus, the number derived represents a minimum figure.

Occurrences during 1958-90

The accepted records of King Eiders published annually in *British Birds* (vols. 53-86) have been divided into three periods: 1958-70, 1971-80 and 1981-90. Table 1 summarises the total of assumed new individuals and the percentage of males and females in each of the 15 geographical areas. Full details of all 1958-90 records are given in Appendix 1.

Table 1. Totals and percentages of individual King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis* by 15 geographical areas (see fig. 1) in three periods during 1958-90

Areas	1958-70		1971-80		1981-90		TOTAL	1958-90	
	♂♂	♀♀	♂♂	♀♀	♂♂	♀♀		%♂♂	%♀♀
1. Shetland	2	1	6	0	10	2	21	86	14
2. Orkney/Highland	0	0	3	0	1	1	5	80	20
3. Moray Firth	0	0	5	0	1	0	6	100	0
4. Grampian to Lothian	1	0	3	1	4	3	12	67	33
5. Strathclyde/Galloway	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	100	0
6. Western Isles	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	100	0
7. Northumberland	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	50	50
8. Norfolk	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	100	0
9. Essex	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	100	0
10. Cornwall	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	100
11. Gwynedd	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	100
12. Cumbria	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	100	0
13. Co. Cork	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	100	0
14. Co. Mayo	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	50	50
15. Co. Donegal/Co. Londonderry	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	100	0
TOTALS	5	1	25	2	19	9	61	80	20

Discussion

The estimated minimum number of different King Eiders recorded in Britain and Ireland during 1958-90 was 61, Shetland having 34% of the total. It must be remembered that this is an estimate of the minimum number of different individuals, based on Common Eider populations being largely resident within an area and the assumption that each King Eider remained with a population unless there is evidence to the contrary (although they may not actually behave like that). Many of the records published in the annual 'Reports on rare birds in Great Britain' (*Brit. Birds* vols. 53-86) were referred to as 'assumed same individual' by the observers concerned (e.g. several of those in Shetland, the males in the Moray Firth, off east Grampian and Lothian, within the Clyde area and off Co. Donegal); therefore, it does seem reasonable to assume that most King Eiders remain within a 'population' of Common Eiders. In earlier years (1958-70), there were fewer observers and consequently less coverage, especially in the winter months. It is difficult to tell, therefore, whether a series of records does relate to one individual. For example, in Shetland, the reports of a male seen on six occasions from 1959 to 1968 may all relate to one individual that began appearing in Ronas Voe each spring from 1969 to 1972 or to anything up to five different individuals; but we have assumed that they relate to just one individual. This is also the case for the female first seen in Scalloway, Shetland, in 1969.

There was an apparent influx of new individuals during the three years 1973-75, which probably reflects an increase in the amount of fieldwork carried out by observers. During those years, seaduck monitoring began in areas where little fieldwork had been done previously (e.g. around the coast of Shetland, within the Moray Firth and off the coast of Grampian). Another apparent influx of new individuals occurred in 1986, when about 60% of the records related to first-summer/immature males. Approximately 46% of all individuals remained for two or more years, with some assumed to remain for up to 14 years. Eiders can live for about 20 years, the longevity record for Common Eider being 28 years (Mead & Clark 1991).

Apparently new individuals have been found in all months, but the majority have been located during the periods of January, September to November and March to May. One reason for this may be that King Eiders are relatively easy to identify at these times of year, but from June to August they are in eclipse plumage and are therefore not so easy to locate within a flock of moulting Common Eiders. Such flocks are also more sedentary, so chance observations are less likely.

From table 1, it can be seen that records of males (80%) greatly outnumber those of females, one obvious explanation for this being that males are easier to identify. With greater observer coverage and identification awareness, however, the number of females found has increased, with 75% of females found during 1981-90. In addition, it is possible that male King Eiders move much farther from their natal breeding colony than do females, as has been

Fig. 2. Plumages of captive male King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis* (Keith Brockie) Facing (page 423), top to bottom: two adult-winter males; adult-summer (eclipse) male; second-winter male (2nd January); second-winter male retaining some first-summer plumage (2nd January); bottom two, males in early stages of moult from first-summer (eclipse) to second-winter (2nd October)



shown for Common Eiders. Baillie & Milne (1989), studying Common Eiders at the Sands of Forvie NNR, found that at least half the males emigrated, with a female to male ratio of 2.5:1 returning to breed. Also, the preponderance of males amongst Forvie-ringed Common Eiders recovered in Scandinavia gives further evidence that a higher proportion of males than of females emigrate (Baillie & Milne 1989). So, if King Eiders behave in the same way, this and the relative ease of their identification would together explain the higher proportion of males than of females in Britain and Ireland.

For future assessments of the number of King Eiders, it would help greatly if observers were to take detailed plumage notes and age and sex each individual to see how many different individuals are within an area. For example, from detailed notes of two females off Donmouth, Grampian, in 1989, the observers concerned considered them different, whereas if these notes had not been available they would have been considered as the same individual. Detailed notes will also help to test the suggestion that individual King Eiders remain with a Common Eider population.

Ageing and sexing

The identification and ageing of King Eider is well documented (Cramp & Simmons 1977; Madge & Burn 1988). Males in adult plumage are unmistakable, but females are very difficult at long range. Female King Eiders lack the triangular head shape of Common Eiders, having a shorter bill and more rounded head. Some female King Eiders often show a markedly pale head. At close range, an additional feature is the indented gape line which turns upwards from the bill, giving a 'smiling' appearance, which is especially accentuated by shadow in strong sunlight. This is quite different from the rather sombre expression of Common Eider. Other features of note are a pale area above the eye, which can also form a pale line running downwards behind the eye, and fine dark subterminal crescentic markings to the breast feathers. Most King Eiders show erect wing sails (modified rear scapulars), but these can also be shown by both male and female Common Eiders, especially during display.

Ageing King Eiders in the field is possible in some plumages. The ageing of males in winter plumage is not difficult, but the precise terminology is complicated because male eiders undergo an additional moult between juvenile and first-winter plumage. This plumage, called here 'post-juvenile', is not shown by female eiders or other ducks. Males can be aged in juvenile, post-juvenile, first-winter, first-summer and second-winter plumages, and females in juvenile, first-winter and adult plumages.

Juvenile King Eiders are a fairly uniform, dull grey-brown, with less contrasting dark and pale markings to the body feathers than those of first-winter and older females and with the pale areas on the head much less contrasting and less clearly defined. The bill is dark, initially slate-grey to dull black, but some males can develop a pale-orange base to the bill, and some females develop an olive-grey bill with a paler nail before the moult into first-winter plumage has progressed very far. Both sexes retain the juvenile wing, rump, belly and tail feathers until they moult into first-summer plumage.

As with Common Eider, the most reliable means of ageing females is by

the appearance of the tips of the greater coverts and secondaries, although there is a great deal of individual variation. On most second-winter and older females, the tips of most of the inner greater coverts and secondaries are white and quite broad, more so on the greater coverts, and very clearly defined. These features appear as two parallel, white bars on the wing, resembling those on the speculum of a Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, but the white bars are narrower than on Mallard or Common Eider. On juveniles, post-juvenile males and first-winters, the tips of the greater coverts and secondaries are only slightly paler than the rest of the feathers; they are either hardly noticeable or at most appear as two very narrow, poorly defined pale brownish bars. In addition, first-winter females usually show a darker head and breast than do older ones, but this is very variable between individuals of all ages.

Males moult almost continuously until their second winter. From juvenile plumage, they undergo a partial body moult in late summer and early autumn, replacing the feathers of the head, flanks, scapulars and breast, and appear basically sooty-black with a whitish breast. In addition, the base of the bill becomes orange-yellow. From this post-juvenile plumage, they undergo a further partial body moult into first-winter plumage, with individuals progressing at different rates, some moulting hardly at all, whilst others attain an almost completely grey crown, white cheeks, white mantle and circular, white thigh patches. The enlargement of the bill-shield is also very variable, but most males develop an obvious orange bill-shield and dusky-red bill. The diagnostic feature of all post-juvenile and first-winter males is that they retain the juvenile feathers of the wing, rump, belly and tail, so that the belly feathers and upperwing-coverts are brown with paler fringes and contrast with the rest of the basically black-and-white plumage.

In late spring and early summer, first-winter males undergo a partial body moult into first-summer (eclipse) plumage, when they appear generally sooty-brown with a mottled paler breast and sometimes a mottled paler mantle. The juvenile wing, rump, belly and tail feathers are, however, retained until they are replaced in a partial body and full wing moult in the next autumn.

Second-winter males differ from third-winter (adult) and older males principally in that the brown is a pale slate-grey, rather than powder-blue, the cheeks are whitish, rather than very pale green, the breast is whitish, lacking the deep-pink flush, and the bill-shield is sometimes smaller and paler. They often show a dark line running down the nape (Dawson 1994, commenting on Ellis 1994). They differ from exceptionally advanced first-winter males in having black bellies and at least partially white median coverts.

Males in eclipse (summer) plumage and those moulting from this into breeding (winter) plumage are more difficult to age, though only first-summer males show dark median coverts. Differentiation of second-summer males from older males is probably not reliable in the field.

The size, shape and shade of the orange bill-shield is so variable between individuals and at different times of year that it is not a reliable feature for ageing.

Ageing and sexing characteristics are portrayed in two especially painted colour plates by KB (figs. 2 and 3, on pages 423 and 426).

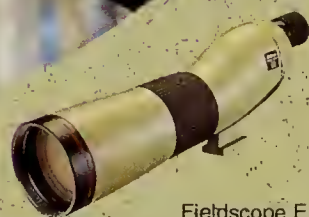


Fig. 3. Plumages of captive male and female King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis* (Keith Brockie)
 Top to bottom: two males moulting from post-juvenile to first-winter, top individual is in a more advanced stage (both 1st December); first-winter female (1st October); two adult-winter females

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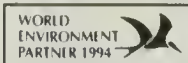
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★ BEWL WATER, on A21 just south of
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★ HANNINGFIELD RESERVOIR,

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Summary

The patterns of occurrence of all accepted records of King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis* in Britain and Ireland during 1958-90 were examined in comparison with those of 'populations' of Common Eiders *S. mollissima*. A minimum total of 61 different individual King Eiders was estimated. The accepted records are listed in Appendix 1. Criteria for ageing and sexing of King Eiders are also discussed.

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Appendix 1. All records during 1958-90 of King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis* in Britain and Ireland, arranged according to areas shown in fig. 1 and assessed as either new or same individuals.

1. Shetland (including Fair Isle) Minimum: 18 males, 3 females.

MALE: 1959, Bigton Wick, adult, 24 June.

MALE: 1962, Yell, 6 June to 5 July.

MALE: 1964, Lerwick, 19 October.

MALE: 1966, between Burra and Mainland, 19 April to 20 June; assumed same individual, Sumburgh, 6-9 September.

MALE: 1968, Moul of Eswick, 12 January to 19 April.

All the above records may relate to the following individual:

MALE: 1969, Ronas Voe, 18 April to 7 May; assumed same individual, 1970, Ronas Voe, 23 March to 9 April; 1971, Ronas Voe, 31 March to 5 April; 1972, Ronas Voe, adult, 14 March to 8 May.

MALE: 1969, Scalloway, 24 May to 28 June; assumed same individual, 1971, Trondra, 10 March to 14 April, Bixter Voe, 24-29 May, Seli Voe, 5 June; 1972, Trondra, adult, 8 March to 13 June; 1973, Trondra/Clift Sound, 11 March to 6 May, Mangaster Voe, 1-4 June, Muckle Roc, 6-7 June, Trondra, 13 November to 29 April 1974; 1976, Burwick, 22 January, Clift Sound, 16 April, Sandsound, 21 April to 7 June; 1978, Tresta/Sandsound, 28 February to 15 May.

FEMALE: 1969, Scalloway, 30 May to 9 June; assumed same individual, 1971, Bluemull Sound, 9 April; 1973, Walls, 25 February, Gulberwick, 1-3 April; 1974, Toft, 21 May to 22 June.

IMMATURE MALE: 1973, Ulsta, 8-17 May; assumed same individual, 1974, north Fetlar, 10 May to 3 June, Gutcher, 10 October; 1975, Sullom Voe, 8 January to 13 March, Hascosay Sound, 18 December to 11 January 1976; 1976, Toft, 13 November, Sullom Voe, 17 November to 23 March 1977; 1977, Hascosay, 27 November; 1978, Hascosay, 8 February.

MALE: 1973, Fair Isle, 15-16 September; assumed same individual, 1974, Fair Isle, 2-4 June and 18 September to 6 November; 1975, Fair Isle, 3 April and 8 September to 2 October.

MALE: 1973, Cunningsburgh, 10 November; assumed same individual, 1974, Quendale, late January, Mousa Sound, 16 March.

IMMATURE MALE: 1974, Toft, 16 May to 7 July.

IMMATURE MALE: 1975, Toft, 29 April; assumed same individual, 1976, Linga, sub-adult, 24-25 October; 1977, Burga Skerries, 28 February to 1 March.

IMMATURE MALE: 1975, Fair Isle, 4 November.

MALE: 1981, Sullom Voe, 3 March to 29 March 1982; assumed same individual, 1982, Holm of Heogland, 24 November; 1983, Colgrave Sound, 28 January.

MALE: 1981, Fair Isle, 15-20 October.

FEMALE: 1982, Lerwick, 31 January to 8 April; assumed same individual, 1983, Lerwick, 20 January to 26 February, Sumburgh Head, 25 August, Yell Sound, 10 November; 1984, Bluemull Sound, 20 January to 12 February, Lunna Ness, 17 April, Sneekan, Nesting, 31 August; 1985, Lerwick, 13-28 April; 1987, Lunna Ness, 23 February; 1988, Bluemull Sound, 8 February, Sumburgh Head, 14 June to 18 September; 1989, Sumburgh Head, 19 June to 28 August.

SECOND-WINTER MALE: 1982, Voe, 17-18 April.

MALE: 1985, Fair Isle, 22-25 May.

MALE: 1986, Sand Voe, 25 May to 7 June; assumed same individual, 1987, Reawick/Sandsound, 13 January to 21 June and 16 December to 16 June 1988; 1988, North Havra, 6 July, Westerwick, 20 August; 1989, Reawick/Tresta, 1 January to 6 June; 1990, Reawick/Tresta, January to 3 July and 21 November into 1991.

TWO FIRST-SUMMER MALES: 1986, Sumburgh Head, 4 July to 22 September, other 7-22 September; assumed same individuals, one or other (both second-winter), 1987, Bluemull Sound, 14 January, Yell Sound, 14-23 February, Leebiton, 20 February, Eswick, 30 April to 19 June, Quendale Bay, 5-27 June, Sumburgh Head, 6 July to 10 August; one or other (both adult), 1988, Haroldswick, 25 April, West Sandwick/Whalefirth, 25 April to 1 May; one or other, 1989, Ronas Voe, 4 April, West Sandwick, 6 April.

MALE: 1987, Whalsay, adult, 3-7 November.

FIRST-WINTER FEMALE: 1988, Ronas Voe, 5-8 November.

FIRST-SUMMER MALE: 1988, Fair Isle, 21 September to 15 November; assumed same individual, 1989, Fair Isle, 18 February to 10 May and 17 September to 5 November; 1990, Fair Isle, 19 July to 13 December.

IMMATURE MALE: 1989, Fetlar, 25 June.

2. Orkney to north Highland Minimum: 4 males, 1 female.

MALE: 1973, Holburn Head, 18 October and 31 December; assumed same individual, 1974, Thurso east, 9 March, Holburn Head, 12 October; 1975, South Walls, Orkney, 8 February.

MALE: 1973, Holburn Head, 18 October.

MALE: 1978, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 19 October.

FEMALE: 1982, Kirkwall, Orkney, 10 December to January 1983.

MALE: 1986, Shapinsay, Orkney, 27 June; assumed same individual, 1987, Thurso Bay, 25-30 March; 1990, Deerness, Orkney, 27-29 May.

3. Moray Firth Minimum: 6 males.

MALE: 1973, Loch Fleet, 17 November to 24 July 1974; assumed same individual, 1974, Loch Fleet, 24 November to throughout 1975, 1976 and 1977; 1980, Dornoch, September, October and 13 December; 1981, Golspie/Embo, all year; 1982, Loch Fleet/Embo, 21 January to 13 April and 23 October to 29 December; 1985, Embo, 3 March to 10 May; 1986, Loch Fleet/Embo, 15 April.

IMMATURE MALE: 1974, Loch Fleet, 20 April to 2 May.

MALE: 1975, Loch Fleet, 14 April to 4 June; assumed same individual, 1976, Nigg Point, 3 February, Lossiemouth, 14-15 February, Loch Fleet/Golspie, 7 March to 30 April; 1977, Loch Fleet/Golspie, 9-13 April, Skerry, 5-6 July, Loch Fleet/Golspie, 24 November throughout 1978; 1979, Loch Fleet/Golspie, 18 February, Lossiemouth, 17-24 March, Loch Fleet, 12 October and 1 December to 4 June 1980; 1980, Dornoch, September, October and 13 December; 1981, Loch Fleet, 19-20 March, Golspie/Embo, 14 November; 1982, Loch Fleet/Embo, 21 January to 13 April and 23 October to 29 December; 1983, Brora to Dornoch, 8 February to 29 December; 1984, Loch Fleet, all year; 1985, Embo, 3 January to 16 February and 3 March to 10 May and 1 June and 7-29 August; 1986, Loch Fleet/Embo, 11 January to 27 April, Lothbeg Point, 9 June, Loch Fleet, 24 September to 30 November; 1987, Brora to Loch Fleet, 1 January to 25 February, Loch Fleet, 30 December; 1988, Loch Fleet/Embo, 14 February to 6 April and 8 November to 3 December; 1989, Loch Fleet/Embo, 20 May to 9 June and 11 October to 10 December.

MALE: 1975, Loch Fleet, 14-19 April; assumed same individual, 1976, Loch Fleet/Golspie, 7 March to 30 April; 1977, Loch Fleet/Golspie, 9-13 April.

IMMATURE MALE: 1978, Loch Fleet/Golspie, 11 December to 24 February 1979.

FIRST-YEAR MALE: 1987, Wick, 25 January to 26 February.

4. East Grampian to Lothian Minimum: 8 males, 4 females.

MALE: 1967, Newburgh, 24 May; assumed same individual, 1968, Ythan, 5 October.

MALE: 1974, Murcar, 13 October; assumed same individual, 1975, Murcar, 4-11 October; 1976, Ythan, 8 June to 14 July; 1977, Collieston, 13-16 March.

MALE: 1974, Culross, 10 March to 15 December; assumed same individual, 1976, Torry Bay/Crombie Point, 3 January to 15 February and November and December; 1977, Torry Bay, 3-28 January.

FEMALE: 1975, Murcar, 23 September to 2 October.

IMMATURE MALE: 1977, Murcar, 17 September.

MALE: 1981, Black Dog, 11-23 June; assumed same individual, 1982, Ythan and Murcar, 23 April to 11 July, Black Dog, 4 July; 1983, Ythan, 30 April to 14 May, Black Dog/Murcar, 8 June to 6 September; 1984, Ythan, 19 May to 4 June, Black Dog, June, Peterhead, 6 November; 1986, Tayport, 8 January to 16 March, Broughty Ferry, 8 February, Ythan, 24 May to 3 June; 1987, Peterhead/Ythan, 28 April to 20 June, Tayport, 6 October and 21 November; 1988, Tayport, 19 February to 14 April, Ythan, 17 May to 28 June, Bridge of Don, 28 August, Donmouth, 20 September; 1989, Tayport, 10 January to 6 April, Broughty Ferry, 8 January to March, Ythan, 1-6 June, Murcar, 16-21 July; 1990, Tayport, intermittently until 31 March, Ythan/Donmouth, 1 April to 10 June and 19 July to 13 October, Tayport, 28 November.

IMMATURE MALE: 1986, Burghead, 3 February.

FEMALE: 1988, Aberlady Bay, 13-17 July.

FIRST-SUMMER MALE: 1989, Ythan, 16 May to 2 June, Donmouth, 26 October to 24 November.

MALE: 1989, Ythan, 25 November to 25 May 1990; assumed same individual, 1990, Murcar, 6 June and 16 July, Girdleness, 2-31 August and 6 October to 5 November, Donmouth, 22 November to 3 December, Ythan, 23 December into 1991.

FEMALE: 1989, Donmouth, 20 August to 17 September.

FEMALE: 1989, Donmouth, 4-22 November.

5. Strathclyde/Galloway Minimum: 3 males.

IMMATURE MALE: 1970, Kirkholm, 30 March.

MALE: 1971, Bute, 2 April, Irvine Estuary, 22 December to 15 April 1972; assumed same individual, 1972, Kintyre, 18-24 December; 1973, Barassie, 10 March, Skelmorlie, 15 April to May, Great Cumbrac, 29 May, Ballantrae, 8-14 July; 1974, Largs, 16-26 March, Great Cumbrac, 1 June, Innellan, 5 June; 1975, Great and Little Cumbrac, 22 April, 21 May and 19-20 June; 1976, Loch Ryan, 22 March and 26 December to 26 February 1977; 1977, Great Cumbrac, 24 April, Woodhall, 9 November, Loch Ryan, 27 November to 4 January 1978; 1978, Loch Ryan, 4 March, Arran, 25 March to 14 May, Bute, 3 April, Catacol Bay, 6 April, Troon, 12 April, Woodhall, 10-25 November, Loch Ryan, 2 December to 10 February 1979; 1979, Tayinloan, Argyll, 3 June, Loch Ryan, late 1979 to 20 January 1980; 1980, Loch Ryan, 10 February, Fintray Bay, 23-30 March, Arran, 5 April to June, Bute, 31 May to 12 June, Port Glasgow and Greenock, 11-30 November; 1981, Port Glasgow, 14 November; 1982, Ardmore/Port Glasgow, 29 August to 9 January 1983; 1983, Bute, 28 April to 2 May, Woodhall, 13 November; 1984, Turnberry, 10-12 March, Wemyss and Meigle Bay, 10 December to 13 January 1985.

IMMATURE MALE: 1979, Gales, 19-20 February.

6. Western Isles Minimum: 2 males.

MALE: 1979, Harris, 19 November.

MALE: 1983, Kyles, Pabay, 28 March.

7. Northumberland Minimum: 1 male, 1 female.

MALE: 1972, Amble, 1 May to end of September.

FEMALE: 1974, Fenham Flats, dead, 11 January.

8. Norfolk 1 male.

MALE: 1986, Scolt Head, 5-15 September.

9. Essex 1 male.

MALE: 1977, Colne Point, 18 July.

10. Cornwall 1 female.

FEMALE: 1986, Portscatho, 17 January to 16 March.

11. Gwynedd 1 female.

FEMALE: 1989, Black Rock Sands, 28 January to 23 September, Aber Dyssini, 13 August.

12. Cumbria Minimum: 1 male.

MALE: 1979, South Walney, 10-23 June; assumed same individual, 1980, South Walney, 12 April to 2 May.

13. Co. Cork 1 male.

MALE: 1959, Baltimore, 29 January to 24 February.

14. Co. Mayo 1 male, 1 female.

FIRST-WINTER MALE: 1985, Belmullet, 17-18 March.

FEMALE: 1985, Belmullet, 17-18 March.

15. Co. Donegal and Co. Londonderry Minimum: 2 males.

MALE: 1971, Portstewart, 17 March to 15 May; assumed same individual, 1972, Portstewart, 1-4 April.

MALE: 1974, Rosbeg, 21 April; assumed same individual, 1976, Rosbeg, April and May; 1977, Rosbeg, 17 July; 1978, Rosbeg, 16-23 April; 1979, Rosbeg, 12-28 April; 1980, Rosbeg, March, April and December; 1981, Rosbeg, April and December; 1982, Rosbeg, April and May, Downhill, 11 June to 4 August.

Anyone with evidence that records listed here as referring to one individual in fact relate to more than one (or that records listed here as referring to different individuals actually relate to the same bird) is invited to write with full details to the authors, who will welcome all relevant information.



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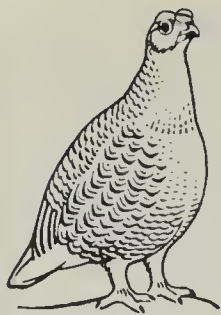
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Notes

Avocets feeding in compact spinning group In early February 1990, at Big Lake in the Djoudj National Park for Birds, Senegal, large numbers of Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* were feeding normally in water some 20 cm deep. Suddenly, 150-200 of them drew together, forming an almost circular, compact group about 4 m in diameter, spinning around on its own axis, the waders walking and feeding rapidly; a few Spotted Redshanks *Tringa erythropus*, in the middle and on the edge of the group, followed this movement and also fed frantically. This behaviour resembles closely that described by J. H. Taverner and by A. D. Malone (*Brit. Birds* 75: 333; 80: 114) for Spotted Redshanks, and we noted a similar feeding method used by a tight group of about 200 Northern Shovelers *Anas clypeata* at the same locality. Despite extensive experience of Avocets, both on the breeding grounds and in winter, we had never before observed the species feeding in this manner.

B. TROLLET and O. GIRARD

Office National de la Chasse, Chanteloup, F-85340 Ile d'Olonne, France

BIWP (vol. 3) states that Avocets will assemble quickly in flocks of several hundred to feed communally on abundant food, but does not mention the spinning movement described here.
EDS

European Golden Plovers pattering feet in water while in flight

On 15th September 1990, at Hay-a-Park Gravel Pits, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, a group of 13 European Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* flew in and swooped low over the lake. As the flock wheeled to the right, two detached themselves and descended to the surface of the water; there, they appeared to flutter, holding their feet down towards the surface and pattering them, with their wings held up at an angle of 45° from the body, in a manner similar to that adopted by European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus*. The plovers did not hover, but appeared to move very slowly along the surface for 5-10 seconds. They rejoined the flock, which made several more very low passes over the pit before flying off south. I can find no reference to European Golden Plovers 'foot-dipping' in this way, nor any explanation for it. As the plovers were about 50 m from me and on the same level, it was impossible to see if there was anything floating in the water that may have attracted them. The weather was cloudy, with a brisk force 3-4 wind, so it was unlikely that there were any reflections to confuse the waders.

STEPHEN M. ROOT

21 Aspin Park Drive, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire

Turnstone joining Turtle Dove flock The notes on waders attaching themselves to flocks of pigeons *Columba* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 461-462; 84: 222) prompt the following. At 10.00 hours on 6th May 1982, at Wood Green Reservoir, north London, four Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* and a Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* flew north in close formation. This was unusual, both for the association between the doves and the wader and in the fact that the reservoir is not on a noted wader migration route; in over 20 years of study, this was the first Turnstone record from the site. It is interesting to speculate whether the birds had joined together while crossing the English Channel, the Turnstone then following the doves inland.

NEIL BOWMAN

113 Norwich Road, Wroxham, Norfolk NR12 8RT

It seems quite possible that such behaviour is responsible for some of the recorded instances of vagrancy in Britain and elsewhere. EDS

Unusual behaviour by Herring Gull towards dog At 08.30 hours on 24th September 1990, while taking my daughter to school in Cheriton, Folkestone, Kent, my attention became focused on a dog running at great speed around the border of a large playing field. Immediately behind it and at a height of 2-3 m was a first-winter Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*. My first thoughts were that the gull was mobbing the dog, but after longer observation it appeared to me that it may have been just a playful interaction between the two. On approaching a hedge about 5 m tall bordering one side of the field, the dog executed a tight right-angled turn; the gull, unable to do this, rose rapidly to clear the hedge, then banked and continued following the dog. The dog would periodically jump in the air and look over its shoulder, so to speak; on occasions when the gull was lost from sight on the other side of the hedge, the dog would stop as if waiting for the gull to reappear. The dog made a total of three laps of the field with the gull following, after which the latter flew off to join an adult Herring Gull perched on a chimney pot of a tall building. At no time did the gull dive at the dog as when mobbing, and so unusual did the spectacle appear that several mothers at the school were overheard talking about it.

N. C. FRAMPTON

76 Shomcliffe Crescent, Folkestone, Kent CT20 3PG

Derek Goodwin has commented that there is no obvious explanation for the behaviour, but that the incident is the more interesting for that. EDS

Wren building autumn nest On 24th October 1990, at West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, I saw a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* carrying dead leaves and other material which it then incorporated into a half-built nest 1.9 m up between a horizontal creeper branch and my car-port roof. Weather conditions at the time were mild and wet. The nest was completed, apart from the lining, by 27th October; the Wren, no doubt a male, sang frequently, and readily gave alarm calls when anyone approached the site. A second Wren, probably a female, was noticed near the nest on two occasions during building, but was not seen to carry any material. The nest remained unlined, and by 8th November it appeared to have been abandoned. I found no evidence that it was used for roosting at any time.

Neither Rev. E. A. Armstrong (1955, *The Wren*) nor *BWP* (vol. 5) mentioned autumn nest-building by this species. Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*Brit. Birds* 73: 106-107), however, described a Wren's nest, apparently built in January, which was used for roosting during a spell of cold weather. I have also come across an earlier record of winter nest-building (and egg-laying), which seems to have been overlooked: a pair of Wrens building a nest in a wall at Churchstoke, Montgomeryshire (now Church Stoke, Powys), on 23rd December 1923; they completed the nest in the next three weeks, and five eggs were laid, but the nest was then deserted (*Brit. Birds* 17: 275-276).

A. P. RADFORD

Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

Presumed bigamy by Common Redstarts In 1990, on a nature reserve in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, eight nests of Common Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* were built in nestboxes. Seven of these were in a stand of mature oaks *Quercus*, and, after the eggs had hatched, five of the males were caught without undue difficulty. At one of the other two boxes, no male appeared to be feeding the brood, while at the seventh the male's visits were sporadic and he was extremely wary; on two subsequent visits, the same pattern was observed. In the early morning of 7th June, however, males were feeding at both boxes and these were later trapped; both had been ringed on 26th May when feeding young in two other boxes. The distance between the boxes of the first male (male *A*) was 160 m, while the boxes of the second male (*B*) were separated by 70 m; in both cases, the areas between the nestboxes contained many oaks. For male *A*, first-egg date at box 1 was 5th May, seven eggs were laid and seven young fledged; at box 2, first-egg date was 14th May and eight eggs were laid, from which six young hatched and were fledged. For male *B*, first-egg date at box 1 was again 5th May, and all six eggs laid produced fledged young; first-egg date at box 2 was 10th May and the clutch numbered seven eggs, six of which hatched and produced fledged young. No other males were seen in the vicinity of the secondary boxes. The young from the subsidiary broods evidently did not suffer shortage of food through lack of attention by the male.

Such a high percentage of apparently bigamous behaviour is unusual for this species.

F. A. LANDER

Brendon, Woolaston Common, Lydney, Gloucestershire

Behaviour of Blue Tit with one leg In the late 1980s, at Hinckley, Leicestershire, a Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* with only one leg visited my garden. It hung from a string of nuts to feed, showing some obvious discomfort. On one occasion, I watched it move along a branch of a lilac tree *Syringa vulgaris* until the side of its body, unbalanced by the missing leg, rested against a twig; this enabled it to preen more easily without overbalancing. It often rested on a branch with its body low down, presumably to take the weight off the leg.

DERRICK E. JEBBETT

70 Upper Bond Street, Hinckley, Leicestershire LE10 1RJ

ZEISS

The Carl Zeiss Award

The Carl Zeiss Award is presented every year as an encouragement to photographers to submit to the British Birds Rarities Committee prints and transparencies which might be helpful during the process of assessment of records of rare birds. Attention is drawn by BBRC members to especially useful or instructive photographs as the records are in circulation, and by the Committee's Secretary, Michael J. Rogers. All photographs circulated with records during the preceding 12 months are then re-examined by the Committee's Chairman, Rob Hume, and by *BB's* Managing Editor, Tim Sharrock, and a combined short-list drawn up from which, after detailed discussion, the winner is selected.

This year's short-list was:

Dr Adrian Wander Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, at sea off Scilly, August 1993

Christine & Norman Winterman Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*, Rye, East Sussex, May 1993

R. C. Wilson Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*, Norfolk, May 1993

Robin Chittenden Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, Norfolk, September 1993

J. P. Moulton Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi*, East Sussex, October 1990

Dr Adrian Wander's photographs of Wilson's Storm-petrel in flight about 60 km SSW of Bishop Rock (plates 111 & 112) showed not only the species' plumage and jizz, but also—astonishingly—the yellow patches on the webbed feet, a diagnostic feature difficult enough to see let alone photograph.

Mr & Mrs Winterman found the East Sussex Bridled Tern late in the evening of 16th May and obtained documentary photographs of it in flight and at rest which were invaluable evidence to augment the notes supplied by the reserve warden, Dr Barry Yates. The bird was seen by about 40 observers early the following morning, before it flew out to sea at 04.00 GMT, disappointing all those who failed to see it later on 17th May.

Several photographers supplied photographs of the Cley Pacific Swift, but those by R. C. Wilson showed the bird's diagnostic features especially well. The judges also noted that seven of Rob Wilson's photographs of other rarities were of an exceptionally high standard and had been selected for inclusion with the annual 'Report on rare birds'.

Robin Chittenden was not the only person to photograph the Norfolk Lanceolated Warbler, but his shots of it were not just portraits but were especially evocative, capturing the species' characteristic postures. (The account of this bird will be published shortly, in the series 'From the Rarities Committee's files', as an example of a very high-quality submission.)

J. P. Moulton's photographs of the Pallas's Reed Bunting established the identity of the bird that, when caught, was considered to be an aberrant Reed Bunting *E. schoeniclus*. It was only the publication of Dr Colin Bradshaw's paper on the identification of Black-faced Bunting *E. spodocephala*, with the section on 'Similar species' dealing with the two reed buntings and, especially,



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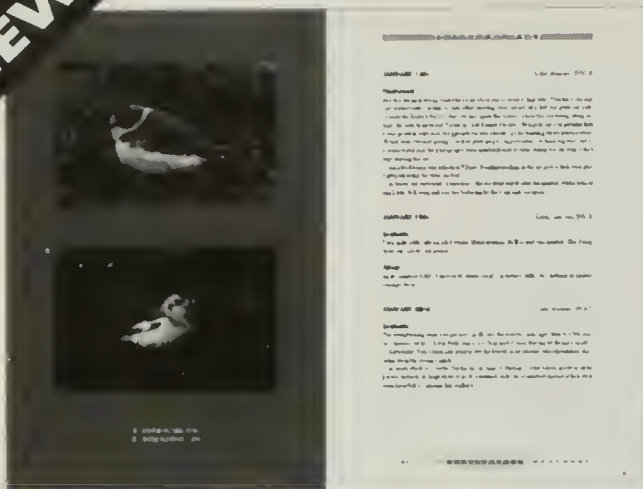
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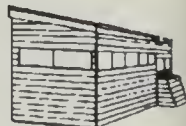
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111 & 112. CARL ZEISS AWARD:
Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites*
oceanicus, at sea off Scilly, 1st
August 1993 (A. Wander)



Ren Hathway's colour plate showing a female Pallas's Reed Bunting (*Brit. Birds* 85: 653-665, fig. 5), that prompted Julian Moulton to realise that the bird had been a Pallas's Reed Bunting and resulted in its submission to the BBRC three years after its occurrence. Without the photographs, the record could not even have been properly assessed, for the only written details were the wing-length (72 mm) and the weight (15.7 g), both low for (but still within the normal range of) *schoenichus*.

After due deliberation, cogitation and digestion (in the best traditions of high-quality competition assessment), the judges selected Adrian Wander's amazing foot-flashing Wilson's Storm-petrel photograph (plate 111) as the winner.

R. A. HUME and J. T. R. SHARROCK
Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Separating Radde's and Dusky Warblers



Colin Bradshaw,
on behalf of the Rarities Committee

In the last few years, there seems to have been a general change of view on the case of separation of Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* and Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus*. The first easily accessible text for field separation of these two species was the paper by Johns & Wallace (1972), but there was still considerable confusion until Madge (1987) refined the criteria. Since then, there seems to have been the feeling that 'It's all sorted out', and the standard of some descriptions of both of these species received by the Rarities Committee has often suggested that there is little chance of confusion in the field. This is not always the case, and some preconceived ideas about how 'easy' the classic features are have been challenged in recent birding literature (Bradshaw 1992a,b; Leader 1992).

Leader (1992) showed photographs of Dusky Warblers with strikingly rich buff undertail-coverts contrasting with the rest of the underparts, a feature regarded as 'classic' for Radde's. He also noted the variability of the rear supercilium, but suggested that this occurs in only a minority of individuals. Bradshaw (1992b) described a Dusky Warbler with 'shadowing' above the supercilium and bright fringes to the primaries—other 'classic' features for identifying Radde's Warbler in the field.

Radde's and Dusky Warblers also regularly get identified using the biometrics of individuals trapped for ringing. Differences in bill width between the two species were mentioned by Williamson (1962), but it was Svensson (1970) who set out, in clearly understandable terms, the differing specific ranges of both width and depth of the bill at the proximal end of the nostril. This has become the 'gold standard' for separating the two species in the hand.

The Rarities Committee has on file details of 44 Radde's Warblers and 40 Dusky Warblers trapped in Britain during 1960-92 and, for this paper, these were examined to see how closely they matched up with Svensson's figures and how other 'classic' features varied. This review is not intended to cover comprehensively all of the identification features of these two species, but sets out to expand the published biometrics and to explore areas where mistakes



This paper is a publication of the British Birds Rarities Committee, which is sponsored by Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd

may be made. Those readers interested in a more general overview of the identification criteria should read the articles by Madge (1987, 1990).

Biometrics

Perhaps the two most important points to state are:

- (1) Unlike the figures quoted by Svensson (which were obtained in museum or laboratory conditions), these biometrics are measured in varying field conditions, by different observers, using different equipment, and so introduce three other variables.
- (2) Very disappointingly, 42% of Dusky Warblers and 20% of Radde's Warblers had neither bill width nor bill depth measured, whilst a further 16% and 25% respectively had only one of these two important measurements recorded. In addition, four birds had measurements taken at the distal (wrong) end of the nostrils. Unfortunately, it appears that this fairly lackadaisical approach is still occurring, with half of the measurements missing in descriptions of birds submitted during the last ten years. Obviously, circumstances sometimes dictate that full biometrics cannot be recorded, but this should be the exception rather than the rule, particularly at bird observatories, where there should be competent recorders, and all necessary literature and equipment should be to hand.

The identification of some birds was fortunately made acceptable by photographic evidence, in the absence of a detailed description and measurements other than wing length; without the photographs the descriptions alone would have been inadequate for confident acceptance.

Bill width (see fig. 1)

Only 28 of the Radde's Warblers had bill width measured. All were equal to or above the range given by Svensson (3.5-4.4 mm), with 83% within that range.

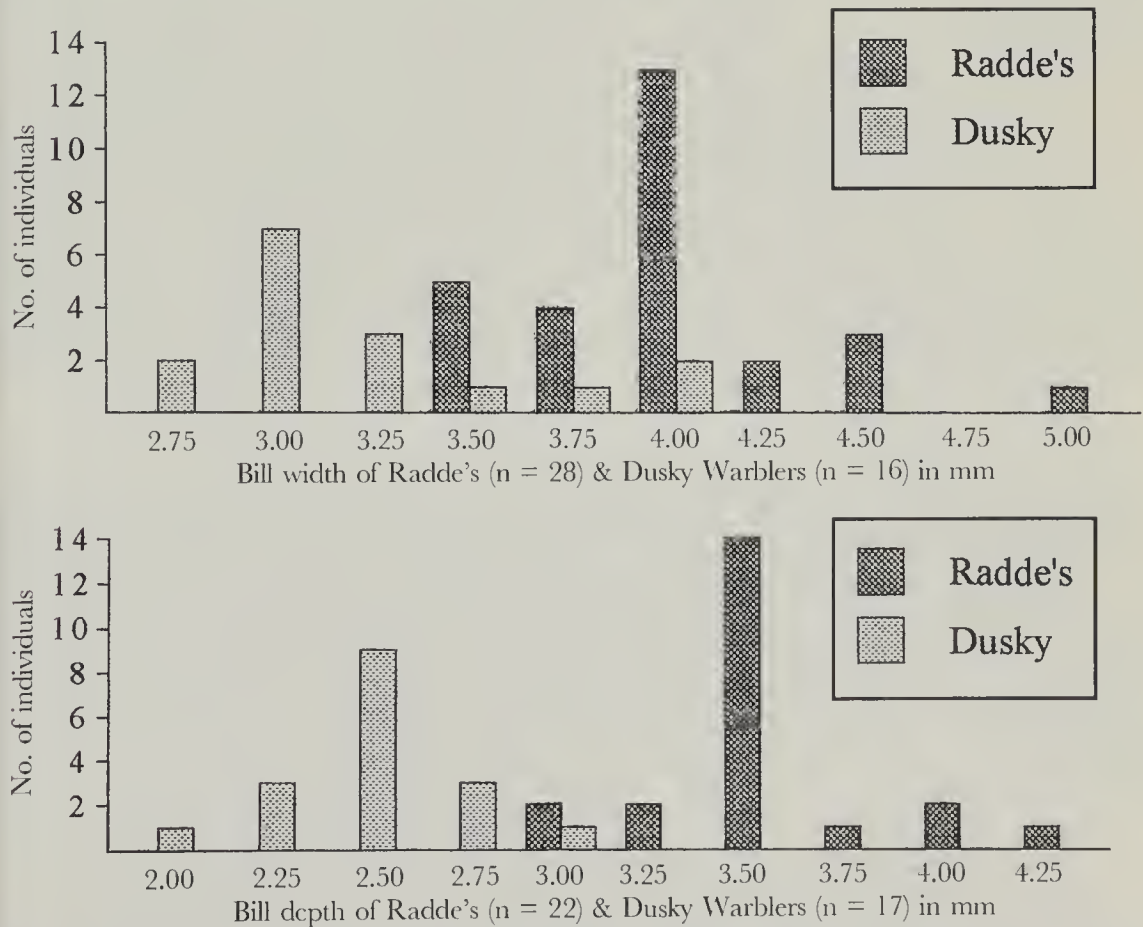


Fig. 1. Diagnostic biometrics (in mm) of Radde's *Phylloscopus schwarzi* and Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus* trapped in Britain during 1960-92



113 & 114. Radde's Warblers *Phylloscopus schwarzi*, China, May 1990 (Colin Bradshaw). Above, showing characteristic supercilium, wider but less clearcut in front of the eye, forming a 'blob'; below, individual showing dull upperparts, dull undertail-coverts and relatively dull facial pattern



115. Below, Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, China, May 1990 (Colin Bradshaw), showing dark coronal band and bright edges to primaries and secondaries, both usually regarded as 'classic' features of Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi*



Only 16 Dusky Warblers had their bill width taken. Four were outside the range given by Svensson for Dusky Warbler (2.5-3.4 mm). Two (both at 3.7 mm wide) had bill-depth measurements of 2.5 mm, well inside the range for Dusky. Two had width measurements of 4.0 mm, but with no accompanying bill depth. Photographs of one of these individuals show that the bird was definitely a Dusky Warbler, and it appears to have a normal bill, but there is no further information on the other individual.

Bill depth (see fig. 1)

Only 22 Radde's Warblers had a record of the appropriate bill depth. Of these, 19 (86%) were within, one (4%) above and two (9%) below the range given by Svensson (3.2-3.9 mm). In the last group, one with a bill depth of 3.0 mm had a bill width of 4.0 mm, well within the range for Radde's Warbler. The other, with a bill depth of 2.9 mm and width of 3.5 mm was intermediate. This individual subsequently died, however, and examination of the skin confirms the identification.

Of 17 Dusky Warblers which had bill depth taken, none was above the range quoted by Svensson (2.3-2.9 mm), with five just below.

Bill length (see table 1)

There was complete overlap between the two species, but Radde's Warbler was the more variable, with bills shorter than and longer than on any Dusky Warbler.

Weight (see table 1)

Radde's Warblers were heavier, ranging from 9.0 g to 15.9 g, with 77% between 10.0-12.9 g, although one from Shetland weighed only 5 g.

Dusky Warblers were lighter, ranging from 7.0 g to 12.5 g, with 90% between 8.0-10.7 g.

Wing length (see table 1)

There was considerable overlap between the two species, with 48% of Radde's Warblers within the range 58-62 mm and a further 25% over 65 mm, and 84% of Dusky Warblers between 53 and 62 mm and none over 65 mm. Note that none of the Radde's Warblers had a wing length under 57 mm and none of the Dusky Warblers had a wing length over 65 mm.

Wing point

There was little difference in wing point between the two species, although Radde's had a considerable spread, with all sequential possibilities from 3rd to 5th, and another bird with 4th to 6th primaries all equal. All Dusky Warblers had either 4th, 4th = 5th or 5th primary longest.

Table 1. Biometrics of Radde's *Phylloscopus schwarzi* and Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus* trapped in Britain during 1960-92

Measurements	Radde's	Dusky
BILL LENGTH		
<i>BWP</i> range	11.6-13.7 mm	10.9-13.0 mm
BBRC range	10.7-15.0 mm	10.9-14.3 mm
BBRC mean	12.4 mm	12.45 mm
BBRC number	32	28
No. > <i>BWP</i> range	2	4
No. < <i>BWP</i> range	8	0
WEIGHT		
<i>BWP</i> (migrants and vagrants)	9.3-13.5 g	6.0-12.5 g
BBRC range	9.0-15.9 g (1 at 5 g)	7.0-12.5 g
BBRC mean	11.56 g	9.18 g
BBRC number	35	27
No. > <i>BWP</i> range	3	1
No. < <i>BWP</i> range	1	0
WING LENGTH		
Svensson's range	56-67 mm	54-66 mm
BBRC range	57-67.5 mm	53-65 mm
BBRC mean	61.14 mm	59.79 mm
BBRC number	42	37
No. > Svensson range	1	0
No. < Svensson range	0	3

Plumage and bare parts

Undertail-coverts

Dusky Warblers were recorded as having undertail-coverts ranging in colour from grey-buff (1) to buff (14), warm buff (7) and rusty, rufous or orange (i.e. the classic colour for Radde's Warbler) on 15. No undertail-covert colour was recorded for three individuals. Thus, 40% of Dusky Warblers which had colour recorded had undertail-coverts confusable with Radde's Warbler.

For all of those Dusky Warblers with bright undertail-coverts, there was a statement that these contrasted with the rest of the underparts, again like Radde's Warbler.

Bare parts

Another 'classic feature' of Radde's Warbler is its pale yellow or flesh-coloured legs and strikingly yellow feet. Examining the descriptions of trapped Dusky Warblers showed that 12% had completely yellow legs, 22% had pink legs and 48% had yellow on the rear of the legs. Not all descriptions included the colour of the feet. Of those that did, 80% were yellow.

Seasonal variation

Radde's and Dusky Warblers become more similar in spring plumage (Bradshaw 1992a). In spring, the obvious separation features that fade are:

(1) supercilium on Radde's Warbler fades and becomes more like that of Dusky Warbler in colour and prominence;

(2) upperparts coloration of Radde's Warbler becomes much duller and less 'oily', more closely resembling that of Dusky Warbler;

(3) undertail-coverts of Radde's Warbler are frequently 'watered down' to a dull yellowy-buff, similar to those of Dusky Warbler.

Examples of both species in spring are shown in plates 113-115.

Call

There is some overlap in the call of the two species. The typical call of Radde's Warbler is a subdued 'tuc'. When the bird is alarmed, however, this can become a much louder and sharper 'tak', almost the same as the typical call of Dusky Warbler.

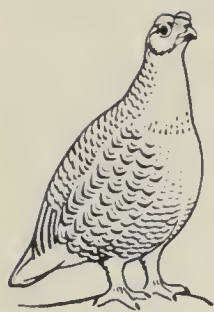
Conclusions

There are several important conclusions from this review of Radde's and Dusky descriptions. These are:

- (1) The biometrics given by Svensson hold true for separating the vast majority of individuals. It is important, however, that both bill depth and bill width at the proximal end of the nostril are measured, as one or the other alone may not be sufficient to identify some individuals.
- (2) As stated by Svensson, there is no other reliable way of differentiating the two species on biometrics.
- (3) A significant proportion of Dusky Warblers show bright rusty or orange undertail-coverts contrasting with the rest of the underparts and, therefore, superficially resemble Radde's Warblers.
- (4) About 60% of Dusky Warblers show at least some yellow on the legs and 34% have either all-yellow or pinkish legs, again superficially resembling Radde's Warbler.
- (5) Most Dusky Warblers show prominent yellow feet.
- (6) Spring Radde's Warblers can look quite like Dusky Warblers.
- (7) Some autumn Dusky Warblers can look quite like Radde's Warblers.
- (8) Some ringers and bird observatories are not, even now, taking adequate descriptions, including appropriate measurements, of the rare birds that they catch.
- (9) Field descriptions of Radde's and Dusky Warblers need to be detailed and precise to exclude the significant proportion of intermediate individuals that resemble the other species. All should be identifiable on a *combination* of carefully described features.

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Mystery photographs



116. Mystery photograph 193. Identify the species. Answer on pages 451-452



A nice piece of meadow?

TRAVELLING in the north of England recently, we came across an interesting piece of wet-meadow land. It did not cover a great area, yet a few breeding Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata* were bubbling overhead and obviously had young nearby. An occasional Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* drummed, and Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* chased off the passing Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*. The water levels had obviously been lowered, as drainage pipes poked out of the ditch walls, but, notwithstanding this, the fields held a rich, dense flora that clearly said to the non-botanical eye: 'These fields have not been re-seeded.'

All very nice and all very enjoyable—yet for how long? The fields surrounding this site were all a lush, intense green. They were bone-dry, with no wetland plants and no birds. The floristic interest was gone and the re-seeded meadows were uniform and boring.

The fields we were standing in were being sold. They had no protection, they were not a Site of Special Scientific Interest, they were not designated a Special Protection Area, and they were not notified under the Ramsar Convention. They were just nice, pleasant to be looking over and with a delightful selection of bird species and they are about to be lost for ever. There can be little doubt that the new owner will ensure that the drainage is efficient, will re-seed the fields and maximise the hay/silage production to feed the herds of local cattle. A few more pairs of curlews, snipe, lapwings, and so on will be lost.

We suspect that there are small sites, just like this, throughout the UK, and at present there is no mechanism, statutory or voluntary, that can save them—only the altruism of the owner.

Carl Zeiss supports County Bird Recording network

For the past six years, *British Birds* has given a free annual subscription to each of the 81 County Bird Recorders in the United Kingdom, as our way of thanking them for the hard work which they contribute to British ornithology in their 'free time'.

We are delighted to announce that *Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd*, sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee, has offered to join with *British Birds* in a partnership to make this annual gesture of appreciation.

Carl Zeiss and *British Birds* both wish to

demonstrate publicly their support for the county bird-recording network, run by the county and regional bird clubs and societies, which leads to the collation and publication of carefully assessed, reliable records in the county and regional bird reports. These reports are the essential backbone to British ornithology, and the envy of ornithologists in other countries. Their close links and long-standing co-operation with the BBRC make the *Carl Zeiss* gesture especially appropriate.

BP Conservation Expedition Awards

British Petroleum has supported the BirdLife International and Fauna & Flora Preservation Society Conservation Expedition Competition since 1990. The 1994 awards were presented by Sir Angus Stirling, Director-General of the National Trust, at Britannic Tower, London, on 23rd May.

Top award of £7,500 went to the 'Way Kambas Project '94'. An expedition in 1993, searching for the rare Javan rhinoceros *Rhinoceros sondaicus* in the Way Kambas National Park, Indonesia, discovered instead the even rarer Sumatran rhinoceros *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*. The 1994 expedition will attempt to census the population. Amongst the other awards is £3,000 to the University of Bristol for a project to collect information on the

great breadth of wildlife on the island of Halmahera, Indonesia. This is the site that is also being supported by this year's British Birdwatching Fair.

Runners-up, who each receive £1,000, include several bird-oriented projects: work in Zapata Swamp, Cuba, home of the endemic Zapata Rail *Cyanolimnas cerverai* and Zapata Wren *Ferminia cerverai*; ornithological survey in the Manche-Chindul forest, Ecuador; assessment of impact of habitat fragmentation on birds in Gunung Halimun National Park, Java; and conservation status of bird species in the newly established Rio Abiseo National Park, Peru. Further information from Georgina Green on Cambridge (0223) 277318.

'The Famous Grouse' on show

The first-ever art exhibition to focus on the Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus scoticus* will be held at the Tryon Gallery, 23-24 Cork Street, London W1, during 5th-20th October 1994 and will then move to Paris during 25th October to 8th November 1994.

Appropriately, the exhibition is sponsored by *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky, which also sponsors our Christmas puzzle every year. For further information, telephone Miranda Page Wood on 071-388-2525.

Who is John Cresswell?

We ask this question as a result of a cutting from the *Eastern Daily Press* (1st June 1994) supplied by Michael Seago. The cutting advertises the Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* view point at Swanton Great Wood, near Fakenham, Norfolk, and is illustrated with a photograph of John Cresswell, eye firmly glued to his 'scope, labelled 'Lining up for a view'. Unfortunately, the photograph also shows quite clearly that the object-lens cover has not been removed. Nice one, John!

Rare birds know where to die

Remember the Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* that met an untimely end at the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust centre at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire? Or the Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* picked up dead at the RSPB headquarters, Sandy, Bedfordshire? *Scottish Birds* (17: 176-177) now gives us the latest. On 5th October 1993, Scotland's first Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* was picked up dead, beneath a window of the Scottish Natural Heritage offices in Edinburgh. Even more amazingly, this individual had been ringed on 24th August 1993 at Wissant, near Calais, France—one of the longest recorded movements for this species.

Rare breeding birds

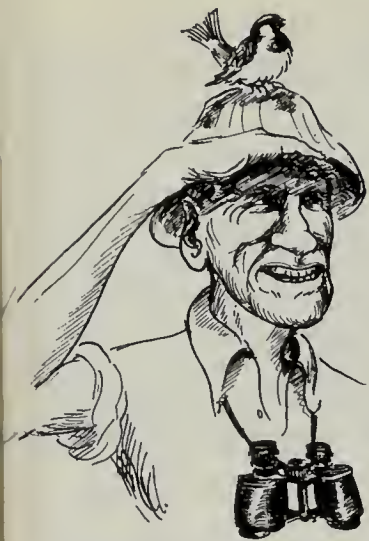
Observers with information on rare breeding birds in Britain in 1994 are requested to send full details now to the relevant county bird recorder (or to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel's Secretary, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN). *Please do not wait until the end of the year.*

The Lords, raptors and pigeons

In the House of Lords on 13th May, Lord Chapple asked the Government: 'Whether, in view of increasing attacks by [Eurasian] Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* and Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* on valuable racing pigeons *Columba livia dom.*, and the fact that Peregrine Falcons now exceed 3,000 pairs throughout the United Kingdom, they will review the laws protecting these raptors.'

The Earl of Arrau replied: 'Racing pigeons may be taken by birds of prey, but the

Government are not aware of evidence to show that large numbers are being lost for this reason. Peregrine and Sparrowhawk populations are recovering from low levels caused by toxic poisoning, but recovery of the Peregrine is not uniform and numbers remain low in parts of England and Scotland; a 1991 survey found 1,283 pairs in the UK. On present evidence, the Government see no justification for reducing the level of protection for these species.'



Denis Summers-Smith honoured

Belatedly, we congratulate Dr Denis Summers-Smith on receiving the Stamford Raffles Award last year.

The Zoological Society of London presents the Award, for distinguished contributions to zoology by an amateur zoologist (or, exceptionally, by a professional zoologist working outside the scope of his personal specialisation).

Described as 'nominally retired' from his profession as a mechanical engineer, Denis admits to an obsessional interest in the genus *Passer*, hence a string of papers in journals ranging from *British Birds* and *Ibis* to *Ostrich* and *Nat. Hist. Bull. Siam. Soc.* Best known are his books on *The House Sparrow* (1963), published by Collins Natural History, and *The Sparrows* (1988) and *In Search of Sparrows* (1992), both published by T. & A. D. Poyser.

We are delighted that two future papers in our series 'Studies of West Palearctic birds' are by Dr Summers-Smith. Guess what? They are on the House Sparrow *P. domesticus* (in press) and the Tree Sparrow *P. montanus* (in prep.).

Morecambe Bay under threat again

Fifteen years ago, water-storage proposals to build a barrage across Morecambe Bay, Lancashire and Cumbria, were 'finally' shelved. They were considered too expensive and the water that the scheme would have produced was not really needed.

Recent reports suggest that Cumbria County Council is trying to revive interest in the barrage, this time to upgrade transport links to Barrow-in-Furness and West Cumbria.

Morecambe Bay ranks second in Britain for wintering and passage waders and is also important for wintering wildfowl, breeding terns *Sterna* and Common Eiders *Somateria mollissima*. (Contributed by John Wilson)

[Modesty prevents John from stating that we recently celebrated his 30 years as a member of the RSPB staff—and a splendid party it was. (Bob Scott)]

West Midland 59

As always, the *West Midland Bird Club Annual Report*, the latest being no. 59 for 1992, is a good read and a good browse. Can we look forward to something even more special for no. 60? In addition to all the traditional county-report information, there are full details of hybrids, escapes and complete county lists.

We do not wish to get deeply into the debate here, but it is a shame that under Ruddy

Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* the entry reads 'Details regarding this species have been withheld, due to the possibility that the data would be used to facilitate the extermination of the Regional population.'

This excellent report (and previous editions) may be obtained for £6.00 per copy (incl. p & p) from D. Dunstan, 4 Blossomfield Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 1LD.

Hybrids, tours and lists

In the latest issue of the American Birding Association's main publication, *Birding*, David Sibley tackles the identification of a horrifying range of hybrids. There is also an overview of bird tours 'modelled in part after a pair of surveys published some years earlier in *British Birds*', which exhibits some interesting similarities and differences between North American and European expectations and realisations (but does not provide criticisms or recommendations of specific tour companies). Costa Rica was the most frequent non-domestic destination, and Texas the most popular within the USA, both suggesting a desire for big lists.

It may not, therefore, be unconnected that a *Birding* supplement entitled 'The 1993 Big Day

Report and The 1993 List Report' contains some 60 pages (yes, sixty pages!) of birders' day totals, year totals and so on (supplied by 1,834 people), which must provide fascinating browsing for those to whom such matters are of interest or for those who habitually thumb through telephone directories for their recreational reading. Such statistics may be of passing interest (and sponsored 'Big Days' are great fun and are useful for funding conservation projects), but think what that manpower, that enthusiasm, that effort and those resources could have achieved . . .

The ABA's address is: PO Box 6599, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80934, USA.

Scottish List

For the first time, an official List of Scottish Birds has been compiled, by the Scottish Birds Records Committee, and has been published in the latest issue of *Scottish Birds* (vol. 17, no. 3, summer 1994). The List is categorised in the same way as that used by the BOU for the British & Irish List, with the cut-off between Category A and Category B at the end of 1957, to coincide with the time when the British Birds Rarities Committee started, in 1958.

Of the 550 species on the British & Irish List, 469 are on the Scottish List (450 in Category A, 13 in Category B and 6 in Category C).

Membership of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club is £15.00 per annum, and members receive the two issues of *Scottish Birds*, the quarterly newsletter *Scottish Bird News* and the annual *Scottish Bird Report*. The address of the SOC is 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5B1.

Ecological project grants

The British Ecological Society regularly awards small grants for amateur and professional ecologists working on a wide range of topics in the UK and abroad. Amongst the most recent announcements are grants to Elliott Toyne towards a study of parasites of nestling Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* and their effect on mortality; and to Christine Wernham to investigate the relationship between ticks and preening activities of Common Guillemots *Uria aalge* on the Isle of May, Fife. Further details from Jean Ross, 11 Dunstable Road, Richmond upon Thames TW9 1UH.

Tora! Tora! Tora!

We are grateful to Keith Betton for drawing our attention to a snippet of news in the 1994 copy of the Public Affairs magazine *Public Policy Review*.

Ornithologists at the Le Mons Institute for the Study and Protection of Birds found themselves surrounded by dead birds at the opening of a new bird sanctuary in Nice. A flock of wayward pigeons (presumably *Columba livia*) crashed through the glass windows at the opening's Press Conference, and speakers and journalists were covered in glass and feathers.

Important Bird Areas

In BirdLife International's *European IBA News*, the news is mixed—some good and some bad. On the basis that you may prefer to hear the bad news first . . .

Quite clearly, governments are getting away with breaking the provisions of the European Union's Birds Directive. Attempts to bring action in the European Court of Justice are obviously being thwarted by 'big business'. The power and influence of the pro-development lobby within Europe is clearly very strong. But some good news . . .

New IBA inventories have been produced for Latvia and France, the latter a joint government and non-government production. The Romanians have established a Biosphere Reserve at the Danube Delta, one of the most important IBAs in Europe. Burdur Lake, Turkey, becomes a listed site now that the Turkish government has ratified the Ramsar Convention. Further information from BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA.

Queen's Birthday Honours

It is always a pleasure to record the fact that friends of *British Birds* have received honours in recognition of their work for natural history and conservation. Two such names appear in the recently announced Queen's Birthday Honours.

Chris Smout is, amongst other claims to fame, a well-thought-of historian, great supporter of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, regional Atlas organiser for the very first 'Atlas', deputy chairman of Scottish Natural Heritage and member of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Scotland. We are reliably informed that he is a *British Birds* reader, although the records relate

that his wife is the actual subscriber. Many congratulations, Chris, on being created a CBE.

Any birders who regularly visit Shetland will be delighted to know that Bobby Tulloch is now an OBE. The citation of 'for services to nature conservation in Shetland' hides a mass of hard work and enthusiasm, coupled with a great desire to share that enthusiasm with others. Bobby is particularly well known for his writing, photography and tour-leading but that just hides all the behind-the-scenes work that Bobby does for his beloved islands. Many congratulations, Bobby!

More on the Great Auk and others

Following on from the recent 'In Memoriam' (*Brit. Birds* 87: 269-270), more news has become available to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the demise of the Great Auk *Pinguinus impennis*. The June 1994 issue of *habitat*, the Bulletin of the Environment Council, records that the earliest record of the species was at Boxgrove, West Sussex, where a wing bone was found in a 500,000-year-old deposit of artefacts. They speculate that it had been carried there for consumption.

A statement from the RSPB to coincide with the anniversary drew attention to the fact that a further 60 species of bird have become extinct since the Great Auk disappeared for ever. Just how many readers would have been aware of this staggering statistic, let alone be able to name most of the species? It matters not that the vast majority come from remote oceanic islands. What does matter is that most, if not all, disappeared because of man's activities. It is a crime of such tremendous magni-

tude that it should be shouted from the roof-tops. But how do you shout about the disappearance of species of which you have never heard?

Mention Passenger Pigeon *Ectopistes migratorius* and most birders can probably tell you the story. But how about the Spectacled Cormorant *Phalacrocorax perspicillatus* from islands in the Bering Strait; or the seven species from New Zealand; or the Labrador Duck *Camptorhynchus labradorius* or Pink-headed Duck *Rhodonessa caryophyllacea*, or any of the other 49 species?

If nothing else, you should go to your local library and take out a copy of *Extinct Birds* by Errol Fuller (published by Viking/Rainbird, 1987). Read it, quietly weep, and then shout about it from the roof-tops.

Do you realise that ten of those 60 species have disappeared in our life time? We're shouting! Are you listening?

Identification by taste

Allen Banks writes to tell us that, whilst browsing through Nelson's *Birds of Yorkshire* (1907), he came across an entry under Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* relating to Yorkshire's second specimen. Shot by a Mr Clubley near Kilnsea in October 1896, it is stated: 'Mr W. Eagle Clark and the late J. Cordeaux dined off the body, and found the flesh dark and tender, in taste like a Wild Goose, with a savour of Grouse.'

Does the BBRC need a Flavour-and-Palatability Expert and, if so, what level of experience would be needed?

RAFOS help in Hungary

A ten-strong team of Royal Air Force ornithologists helped on an international conservation project in Hungary recently. Their prime task was to locate nests of Great Bustards *Otis tarda* for the Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Society, so that Imre Fater, project director, could arrange safeguards with the farmers in whose fields the birds were nesting. Such co-operation would have been impossible before the recent political changes.

Further information from Flt Lt Lingard, Mission Support Wing, Royal Air Force, Waddington, Lincoln LN5 9NB.

Tree Sparrows at Beddington

Beddington Sewage-farm has long been known as the premier site in Surrey/Greater London for breeding Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus*. The population is now isolated from other colonies. Although 40 pairs nested in 1991, it was felt that the habitat was capable of supporting a larger population.

Thames Water Utilities Ltd, which owns and manages the area, gave permission and financial assistance for 100 Tree Sparrow nest-boxes to be installed in 1992. The 1993 breeding season proved to be particularly successful: 51 pairs utilised the nest-boxes, raising 83 broods and a minimum of 392 young. With an estimated additional 114 young being raised from pairs using 'natural' sites, a grand total of 506 fledged young is most impressive.

Beddington Sewage-farm is now believed to hold the largest surviving colony of Tree Sparrows in Britain. The continued abundance of a suitable food supply, the lack of competition for nest sites and a lack of disturbance appear to be the main factors contributing to the success of this breeding colony. This is in stark contrast to the continued and dramatic decline of the species elsewhere in Britain.

Plans to infill part of Beddington were rejected recently, but this decision is to be appealed against by the site-owners, so the future of the Tree Sparrows and of Beddington Sewage-farm itself still remains precarious.

For more information: Beddington Farm Bird Group, 11a Egmont Road, Sutton, Surrey SM5 2LT. (Contributed by A. Pearson)

30 years at Leighton Moss

One of the RSPB's premier reserves, Leighton Moss, Lancashire, celebrated its thirtieth anniversary on 16th May 1994. Through this period 'The Moss' has managed to retain its population of breeding Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* in the face of a national decline—it now holds 25% of the British population. In addition, both Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* and Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* have successfully colonised, the population of the former reaching 40 nesting pairs. Visiting birdwatchers have also increased, from an average of one per day in 1965 to a total of some 70,000 in 1993.

The anniversary was marked by the announcing of the twinning of Leighton with Lake Kolon, a 1,000-ha reedbed in the Kiskunshag National Park, Hungary. The two sites share similar bird species and similar management problems. To overcome reed encroachment into open water, Lake Kolon is using a technique of underwater cutting first pioneered at Leighton Moss.

As an anniversary present, and part of a major sponsorship deal with the RSPB, Barclays Bank presented the reserve with a new tractor and front loader. (Contributed by John Wilson)

OBC 10

Belated congratulations to the Oriental Bird Club, which achieved its tenth anniversary on 4th April.

In celebration, the Club has produced a bumper 72-page (and appropriately bamboo-bedecked) Special Issue of its *Bulletin* (no. 19, May 1994). In this, Nigel Redman and Richard Grimmett (present Chairman and first Chairman respectively) review the formation and achievements since the initial meeting in Norwich in April 1984, and Carol Hiskipp reports on the OBC's ten years of commitment to conservation, with an amazing £21,000 spent funding over 50 projects.

Among the many other items, one can share the excitement of Simon Harrap and Tim Fisher on discovering a mystery woodcock *Scotopax* roding in the Philippines and of Ben King on spotting what may have been a Diabolical Eared Nightjar *Eurostopodus diabolicus* in Sulawesi (known from only a single specimen collected in 1931).

The achievements of the OBC's first ten years must surprise even its founders. It has almost 1,200 members in 47 countries.

To join, write to the Membership Secretary, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Rustic, but not decrepit



We apologise to *The Countryman*, less ancient than we suggested. Although the latest issue of that readable bimonthly is 'Volume 99, No. 3', this does not mean that *The Countryman* is almost 100 years old as we recently deduced (*Brit. Birds* 87: 97). The Editor, Christopher Hall, tells us that 'We are somewhat younger having seen the light of day first in 1927.'

£12 p.a. in UK; subscription enquiries: 081-646 6672.

Grants from the EAF

It is good to see some of our sister organisations included in the 1994 distribution of Environmental Action Fund resources funds to assist voluntary organisations in their environmental work. These include the Bat Conservation Trust, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, the RSNC The Wildlife Trusts Partnership, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust and the Woodland Trust, among a long list of recipients.

Notebooks out!

Please remind any young birders who are aiming to enter for this year's Young Ornithologists of the Year competition that the closing date for receipt of field notebooks is 20th September. There's £2,800 up for grabs (see *Brit. Birds* 87: 199, 341, 402), so we want no potential winner to miss the deadline.

Acid rain and Great Tits

In a recent article in *Nature* (368: 446-448), four Dutch research workers (J. Graveland, R. van der Wal, J. H. van Balen and A. J. van Noordwijk) established a connection between the levels of acidification and of breeding success of Great Tits *Parus major*. On poor, acidified soils in the Netherlands, an increasing number of Great Tits, and other forest passerines, produce eggs with thin and porous shells. This thinning and related high incidence of clutch desertion are caused by calcium deficiency. Snail shells are the main calcium source for the laying female, but snails are becoming scarcer as a result of a decrease in soil calcium. Acid deposition is the main cause of decreasing calcium levels in the poorer soils. A link between degree of acidification in rivers and breeding success of aquatic birds such as Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* and Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* has been demonstrated previously, but the authors consider that this may be the first example where acidification has been established as affecting woodland species.

What chance for the Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, that well-known snail-eater?

Great Kent Bird Race

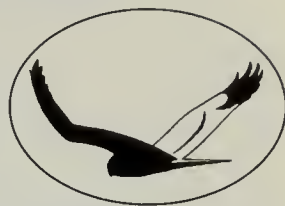
Much to his credit, Chris Barker, with continued enthusiasm, managed to encourage even more teams to take part in 1994. Linked with the national county bird race, the aim is to raise funds for BirdLife International and the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation. Some 30 teams took part in this, the third year of the race, and jointly raised in excess of £6,000. A new Kent record of 145 species was established by the Motney Hill Posse Team, while the old record-holders, the Kent Veterans, managed 143. The earliest 100 came from Dartford Informers at 08.13 GMT. The Veterans managed the goodies, with Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* and Hoopoe *Upupa epops*. The challenge is now on to record 150 in a day in Kent. (Contributed by Don Taylor)

We'll believe it when we see it

Among the 'I'd have got it to you sooner, but . . .' letters that we receive, we especially liked the originality of the recent: 'I have been on a field class, pretending to be a badger while wearing a radio-collar so that students could practise radio-tracking.'

'Devon Birds'

Some local clubs produce occasional newsletters and an annual report. The Devon Bird Watching and Preserva-



tion Society, however, produces not only its newsletter, *Harrier*, but also a biannual magazine, *Devon Birds*, which is always worth reading. The latest issue (vol. 47, no. 1) tells of 20 years of study of Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca* at Okehampton, the birds of Dartmoor's relict oakwoods, an update on the census of Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus*, roof-nesting by Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* and Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus* in Bristol, and various notes and news items. More a journal than a magazine: a publication of which the DBWPS is entitled to feel proud.

The annual subscription is a mere £8.00. Write to D. G. Jenks, Membership Secretary, 27 Froude Avenue, Torquay, Devon TQ2 8NS.

Quintessentially rare

This phrase is used by Anthony McGeehan, Dave McAdams and Killian Mullarney when describing the three *Pterodroma mollis/madeira/fae* species in a highly readable ID-oriented article, accompanied by six photographs by Tony Marr, in the latest issue of the magazine *Birdwatch*.

Every seawatcher who aspires to see (and clinch) one of these gems—described by our Irish trio as the seawatchers' 'Holy Grail'—will drool over August 1994 *Birdwatch*.

Back numbers are £2.95 each from 1 Northumberland Park I. E., 76-78 Willoughby Lane, London N17 0SN; phone 081-885 2447.

New National Parks in Estonia

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'Bird Watching' highlights

With September's edition of *Bird Watching* magazine, you will receive a free Bird & Wildlife Directory to products and services for birdwatchers; Roy Hargreaves and Dave Nurney identify Britain's larks, both resident and rare; there are guided tours around East Sussex and Cley; David Tomlinson investigates the murky world of 'grey' imported optical equipment; 24-pages of bird sightings and free-to-enter competitions. *Bird Watching* is available on the 18th of each month.

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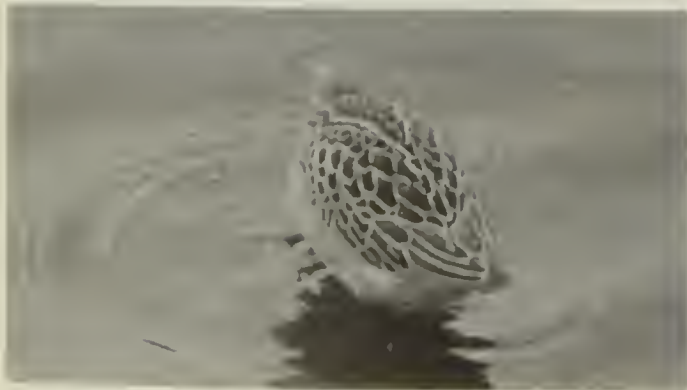
Monthly marathon



The two birds shown in plate 94 were named as White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons* (37%), Bean Geese *A. fabalis* (35%), Pink-footed Geese *A. brachyrhynchus* (14%), Greylag Geese *A. anser* (8%) and Lesser White-fronted Geese *A. erythropus* (6%), with one vote for Ferruginous Ducks *Aythya nyroca*.

They were Whitefronts, photographed in Germany in October 1991 by Axel Halley.

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117. Seventh 'Monthly marathon', sixth stage: photo no. 99. Identify the species. Read the rules on pages 25-26 of the January 1993 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th October 1994



Mystery photographs

193 A quick glance at the bill of this month's mystery bird (plate 116, on page 442) should have quickly narrowed down the options to a finch (Fringillidae), bunting (Emberizidae) or sparrow (Passeridae). A closer look at the bill reveals a distinct 'S' shape to the cutting edge of the lower mandible, and this, in conjunction with the longish tail and the wavy edge to the dark tertial centres (particularly on the largest tertial), leads us to the conclusion that the bird is a bunting.

The bird is at the nest, indicating that it is the breeding season, and this can give us clues as to its age. Since it has heavily abraded tertials and tail feathers and lacks any downy feathers, it is fair to assume that we are looking at an adult, and the heavily streaked crown and generally 'scruffy' head pattern mean that it must be a female.

The indistinct eye-ring, striking flank streaks, heavily marked upperparts, bold head pattern, fine malar stripe and short primary projection all combine to leave us with the choice of Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*, Pine Bunting *E. leucocephalos* or Cirl Bunting *E. cir-lus*. Female Yellow-breasted can be eliminated immediately: it shows two pale wingbars, a rather plain 'face' (though with striking supercilium and moustachial stripe) and a (sometimes/often ill-defined) crown-stripe, all of which our bird clearly lacks.

Probably the first thing we noted about this bird was its bold head pattern, and rightly so, for here lie the best clues to its identity. If we examine the head pattern closely, we notice a thick, dark eye-stripe that is cleanly separated from the dark moustachial stripe by a pale band that runs down the entire length of the ear-coverts, breaking the dark rear border of the latter, and continues to the bill. The pale ear-coverts also serve to define the moustachial stripe clearly right up to the bill. The supercilium is reasonably prominent behind the eye and sharply defined between the eye-stripe and the well-streaked crown, the latter appearing uniformly streaked throughout. The malar stripe, although fine, is clearly visible and sharply defined. All of these features combine to identify our mystery bird as a female Cirl Bunting. Yellowhammer would have shown a slightly less contrasting head pattern, with broader, less dense streaks on the crown, pale forehead, somewhat darker ear-coverts with paler patches at the rear and usually an unbroken dark rear border, and less well-marked eye-stripe, moustachial stripe and malar stripe. Pine Bunting is very similar to Yellowhammer and shares most of the same characters, in particular having a less contrasting supercilium and moustachial stripe than Cirl, and many also have a pale, dark-bordered nape spot.

If the photograph, taken by J. F. Reynolds in Somerset in summer 1957,

had been in colour it would have been far too easy: the buff tones of the Cirl Bunting's supercilium and ear-coverts would have been apparent, as would the contrast between the vivid chestnut-fringed scapulars and the grey-brown mantle. Note, however, that the much-vaunted olive-brown rump of Cirl would not have helped the identification, as it is hidden by the wings.

The prominent flank streaks may have swayed some readers away from Cirl Bunting. It should be pointed out, however, that, while Cirl Bunting does have fine streaks on the breast, these can lengthen and thicken on the flanks, particularly near the vent.

Those with good memories will have avoided any problems with the bird in this mystery photograph: it has featured once before in this same series, over a decade ago (*Brit. Birds* 75: 283-285).

ROY HARGREAVES

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Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 18th July to 14th August 1994

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* Female retrapped at Tynemouth (Tyne & Wear), 24th and 26th July.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Holbeach St Matthew (Lincolnshire), 24th July.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* Keyhaven Marshes (Hampshire), 17th-18th July.

White-rumped Sandpiper *C. fuscicollis* Rutland Water (Leicestershire), 21st-24th July; Frodsham Marsh (Cheshire), 11th August; Cliffe (Kent), 12th-14th August.

Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* Stanwick Gravel-pit (Northamptonshire), 31st July to 1st August; Ballycotton (Co. Wexford), 6th August.

Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos* Lough Beg (Co. Londonderry), 11th August.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *C. acuminata* Adult, Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 6th-14th August (potential addition to Irish List).

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* Elmley (Kent), 19th-22nd July; Greatham Creek (Cleveland), 22nd-26th July.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* Stithian's Reservoir (Cornwall), 12th August.

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire), 22nd July (potential addition to British & Irish List).

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* Filey Brigg, 19th July.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* Southeast Mainland (Orkney), 18th July.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* Sandwich Bay (Kent), 2nd-14th August.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* Adult, Bartin's Bay, Lough Neagh (Co. Armagh), late July to 11th August.



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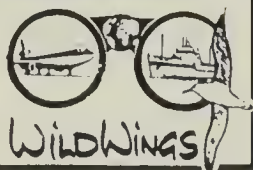


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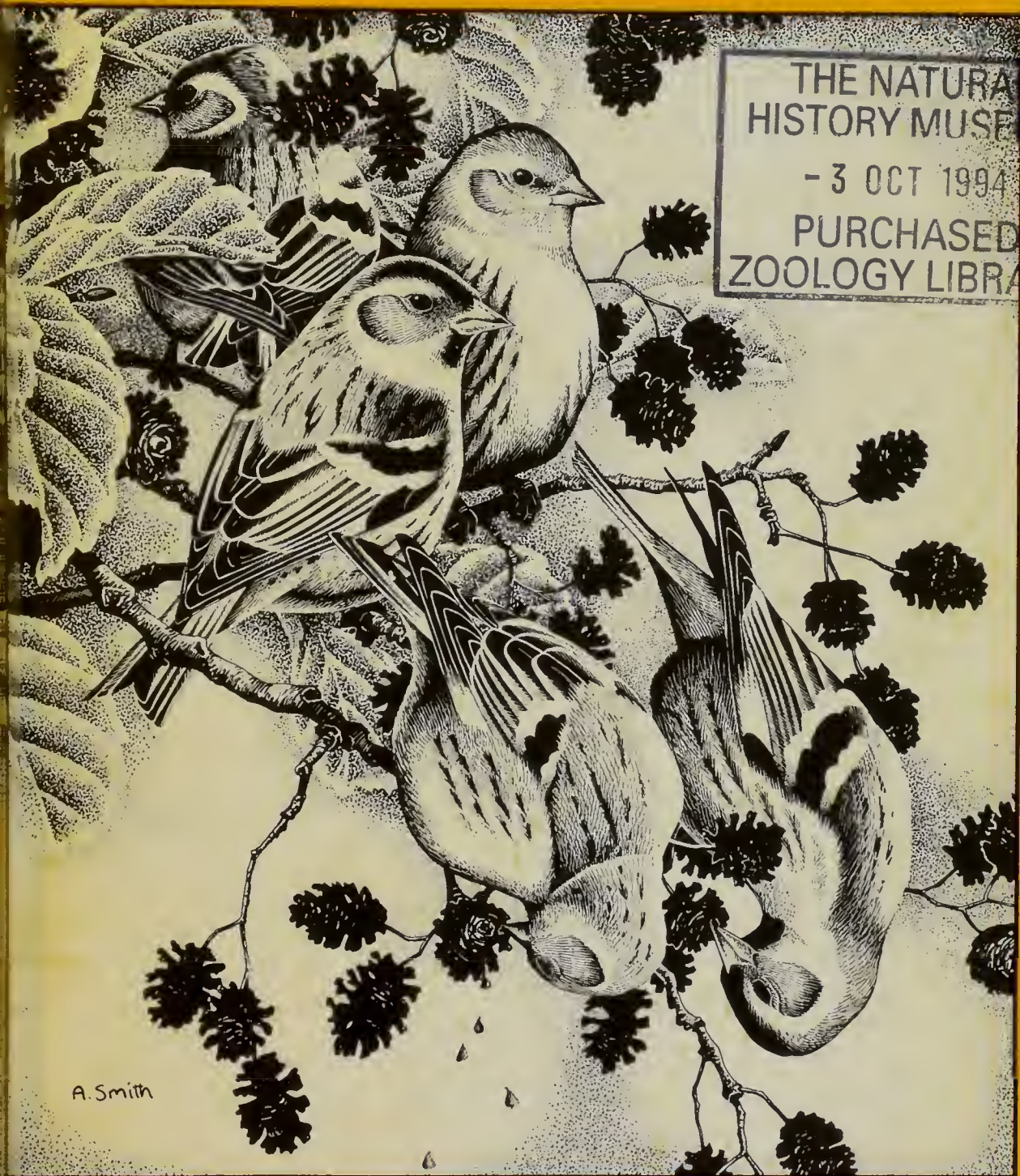
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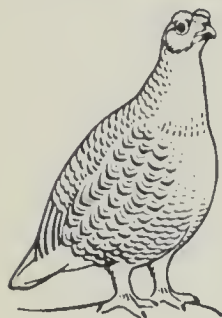
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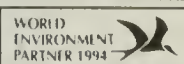
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The ornithological year 1993

Ian Dawson and Keith Allsopp

This report attempts to summarise the major bird movements and influxes of 1993, as well as rarity highlights. All the rarities noted here have been accepted by either the BBRC or the Irish Rare Birds Committee. Those records still pending are, therefore, not included. Full details of rarities can be found in the annual rarities report in the next issue of *British Birds*.

Weather

The year began with a few days of very cold continental air, which was violently displaced on 5th January by a westerly airstream carrying intense low-pressure systems: these brought a series of gales especially in northern Scotland, resulting in the wreck of the MV *Braer* off the southwest tip of Shetland, and an influx of white gulls. Unsettled but mild weather persisted until an anticyclone, building from the south, began to dominate from late January and into February, triggering an inland movement of **Shags** (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*). In the first half of February, the centre of the anticyclone was over the Continent, and cloudy but mild conditions brought unrelieved gloom over much of the British Isles. The centre transferred to the west by 15th, with the resulting northerlies bringing short periods of snowy weather.

By early March, a high-pressure ridge across to Scandinavia turned the winds to cold easterlies, and a subsequent resurgence of pressure from

At one time, we published a monthly summary of unchecked migrant and rarity records under the title 'Recent reports and news'. More recently, we have published such summaries three times a year under the title 'Seasonal reports'. We now believe that a more considered annual summary, including (so far as possible) records which have been verified by the Rarities Committee or other appropriate bodies, is of more value. This is the first such summary, compiled on our behalf by Ian Dawson and Keith Allsopp and incorporating relevant currently accepted records of rare birds assessed by the BBRC. It will, we hope, not only provide a useful source of reference, but also whet readers' appetites for next month's annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. EDS

Southeast Europe established southerlies from 8th to 14th, keeping encroaching Atlantic weather fronts at bay, and producing an early flush of summer migrants. With the anticyclone slipping south, mild westerlies took over, bringing wet and windy conditions to the north until 22nd, when cold anticyclonic weather followed.

Dull, wet, cyclonic weather, beginning on 29th March, carried on through April until 23rd, with a Scandinavian high influencing eastern coastal areas from 8th to 15th. A pool of cyclonic cold air remained over France until the beginning of May, with gloomy easterlies on its northern flank covering the British Isles. Easterlies were a dominant feature of May, producing some exciting East Coast birding as high pressure to the north was a recurring pattern, interrupted by the occasional Atlantic depression with heavy rain in western and northern areas.

After a period of warm anticyclonic weather in early June, an incursion of colder air from the west on 11th brought further heavy rain, followed by a cool, quieter, northerly period as pressure rose to the west. The settled weather continued into July, but, as the wind turned westerly with the high moving south, a long period of unsettled cyclonic weather began from 8th and continued into the middle of August.

High pressure returned to the south and west, dominating from 16th August, the cool northerly air staying until 6th September, when the passage of Atlantic cyclones resumed, bringing further periods of heavy rain in from the west. Seawatching was often exciting from August through to October; and the unsettled weather in September resulted in generally good birdwatching, especially in the Northern Isles and on the east and south coasts of Britain. This weather pattern continued into October, but high-pressure systems in the western Atlantic impeded the cyclones' progress eastwards. A change to anticyclonic weather followed from 16th as pressure rose over Northern Europe. With northeasterly winds, temperatures dropped, but recovered as southeasterlies followed at the end of the month through into November, resulting in a remarkable inland passage of **Common Eiders** *Somateria mollissima*.

From 8th November, vigorous Atlantic cyclones battled with the Continental high for supremacy, with several cold snaps as the east gained the upper hand. Into December, the west won, and, with the Azores high pushing the cyclone track to the north, temperatures remained above average, but rainfall was twice the normal as the year ended.

Divers to cormorants

Numbers of divers and grebes inland were unremarkable in both winter periods, though it was a good year for the spectacular **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii*: after a typical Shetland January record, a more accessible individual was in Filey Bay (North Yorkshire) on 21st-27th March. This was followed by five more between mid April and mid May, including two well south, off the Kent and Devon coasts, while late in the year there were

single-day sightings off Northumberland and Sutherland. Long-staying **Pied-billed Grebes** *Podilymbus podiceps* remained in west Cornwall and Northumberland throughout the year.

The usual **Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophrys* continued to attract visitors to the northern tip of the kingdom, returning to Hermaness, Unst (Shetland), from 7th April to 13th July, while it or another was seen at

sea 54 km southeast of Newhaven (East Sussex) on 17th October.

In recent years, **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea* has usually been the more numerous of the two large shearwaters in British waters, and this year proved no exception. After the odd winter and spring sighting, small numbers became regular off Porthgwarra (Cornwall) from 14th July, peaking at 162 on 31st. The species was then reported from more than 30 sites in August, but Porthgwarra remains the Mecca, with more than 500 seen there on both 16th and 17th August; small numbers were scattered through September, with a peak on 9th of 72 off St Mary's (Scilly); also of note were six off North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 23rd and seven off Seafield (Lothian) on 26th. After the first **Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis* off Skokholm (Dyfed) on 14th June, there was one July report, then small numbers in August from just eight sites, with a maximum of 48 past Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) on 1st August; in September, a good movement off Devon and Cornwall on 9th and 10th peaked at 271 past Porthgwarra.

Sooty Shearwaters *P. griseus* started appearing in the second half of July, and in the North Sea mainly from 22nd August. There were 277 past Uiscad Point (Strathclyde) on 27th August. In September, there was a good movement in the Southwest on 9th and 10th September, with a peak of

441 past Pendeen (Cornwall) on 9th; good numbers also frequented the North Sea throughout the month (plate 118), with large movements on 3rd-5th, and again on 13th, and on several dates in the last week of the month: high counts included 626 off the Farne Islands (Northumberland) on 5th, 400 past there on 13th, 625 off North Ronaldsay on 24th, and 960 past Flamborough Head (Humberside) on 27th. October counts included 500 off Bridges of Ross (Co. Clare) on 2nd October, and well over a thousand between Fife and Tyne & Wear on 12th; 66 were still present off North Ronaldsay on 2nd November.

The passage/moult flock of **Mediterranean Shearwaters** *P. yelkouan* off Portland (Dorset) in the last five days of June and first six days of July peaked at 81 on 30th June; this newly separated species was then regular off the Devon and Cornish coasts from the second half of July through to September, with a maximum of 30 off Pendeen on 10th September; small numbers also reached the North Sea, though the only confirmed report of a **Little Shearwater** *P. assimilis* was of one past Cape Clear Island on 26th August.

Amongst the smaller pelagic species, **Wilson's Storm-petrels** *Oceanites oceanicus* remain virtually invisible from land: a total of 12 was seen in August, all at sea from boats, with ten in the Western Approaches (plates 111 & 112), one 20 km south of Cape Clear,



118. Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus*, off Northumberland coast, 12th September 1993
(Wendy Dickson)

and the most unexpected on a pelagic trip off Shetland on 8th. Movements of **Leach's Storm-petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were unremarkable, with, in September, most reports on 4th at a number of North Sea coastal watchpoints, then rather more widespread from 12th to 14th, with peaks of 25 past Hartlepool (Cleveland) and 20 past Carnsore Point (Co. Wexford), both on 13th. Unusually, however, there were few late-autumn reports. Astonishingly, a **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *O. monorhis*, was caught at Tynemouth (Tyne & Wear) on 21st July, and again on 28th and 29th; the same female for the fourth year running.

An amazing influx of **Shags** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* into the English Midlands, in early February, totalled perhaps 100 or more, 56 of these together in Nottinghamshire on 3rd; individuals from this influx remained at some sites through the spring and summer.

Herons

Although **Great Bitterns** *Botaurus stellaris* are now very rare as breeding birds, there were good numbers in the first winter period, including five in Nottinghamshire in January/February; there was a small influx again at the very end of the year.

Little Egrets excepted, it was an average sort of heron year, with just two **Little Bitterns** *Ixobrychus minutus* in late April, and another on 23rd June in Avon, five **Night Herons** *Nycticorax nycticorax* from late March to June (and one from 1992), and three **Cattle Egrets** *Bubulcus ibis* in April and early May. There were about half a dozen reports each in spring and autumn of **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea*, and **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* was notable by its absence. **Great White Egrets** *Egretta alba*, however, seem to be on the increase, with four in spring, one in July, and individuals in each of the last four months

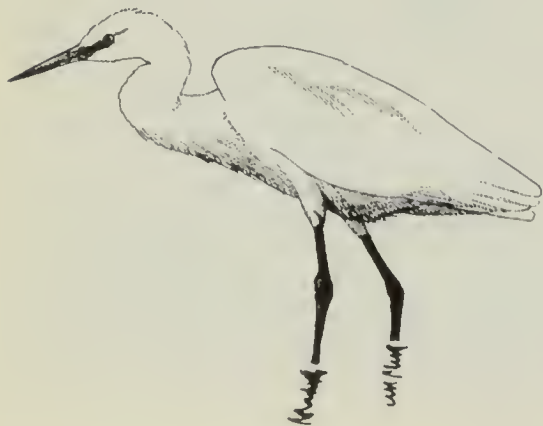
of the year in the Southwest, with finally one in Norfolk from 22nd December into 1994.

The graceful **Little Egret** *E. garzetta* put in a strong claim to be named as 'Bird of the Year'. January started with about 70 wintering in the Southwest. Numbers declined in spring, presumably as many migrated south to breed, though some were still present at a minimum of 37 sites in June, when they were less confined to the south and west. Numbers started to increase again from the second half of July, and built up rapidly in August, with reports from at least 120 sites, notable counts including 53 on the River Lynher (Cornwall) on 29th and 57 on Thorney Island (West Sussex) on 31st. Even allowing for duplication, the total must have run into hundreds. On Jersey (Channel Islands) numbers increased from 15 on 1st August to 47 on 21st, 53 on 7th September and a maximum of 70 at the end of September. By November, the wintering population had settled down at probably not many more than 100, the vast majority along the South Coast from West Sussex to Cornwall; despite the huge numbers now occurring, this heron is still a good find anywhere away from the southern and western coastal counties. And to think that until recently it was an official rarity!

Stork sightings fell neatly into two seasons, with all 20 or so **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* between April and early June, including three together in late April and a total of five in Devon and Cornwall on 1st May, while the nine **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* reported were all in south and west England between July and October, and may have involved some duplication. With the apparent demise of the long-lived **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* in Kent, we lost an old friend and stalwart of many a year-list and life-list, 1993 proving to be the first blank year for this species since 1971. Sightings of **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* were typical, with around 20 in May and June, mostly on the south and east coasts of England, then up to half a dozen wintering from October in the Southwest.

Wildfowl

Apart from a small influx of about 2,000 geese, mainly **White-fronted Geese** *Anser albifrons*, on the East Coast in February, goose and swan movements were unexceptional. There were two **Snow Geese** *A. caerulescens* near Kintore (Grampian) in the latter half of March and April, while half a dozen small-race **Canada Geese** *Branta canadensis* appeared in other goose flocks in Scotland and



Ireland in both winter periods, including one shot in Grampian which had been marked with a neck collar in Maryland, USA. There were also three **Brent Geese** *B. bernicla* of the race *nigricans* on the east coast of England in the first winter period, while two single adult **Red-breasted Geese** *B. ruficollis* were present in both winter periods, with, respectively, Barnacles *B. leucopsis* at Caerlaverock (Dumfries & Galloway) or on the Cumbrian Solway marshes, and Brents in Essex and Kent.

Amongst the American dabblers, long-staying drake **American Wigeons** *Anas americana* were in Co. Cork, from January to March and again from October to 1994, with two drakes in Fife, similarly from 1992 and again from October. There were four other winter records, and, coincidentally, on 23rd May, drakes in Cornwall and at Flamborough Head. There were at least half a dozen drake

Common Teals *A. crecca* of the Nearctic race *carolinensis* between March and June, then up to eight in the second winter period. A female **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors* at Blagdon Lake (Avon), from 1st May to 10th October, was paired with a drake Northern Shoveler *A. chrypeata* (not for the first time). This part of England had a monopoly on the species, with a long-staying drake at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) from 29th May to 16th October, and a first-winter drake at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 9th-11th October.

Garganeys *A. querquedula* appeared in good numbers from early March, including nine together at Llanfairfechan (Gwynedd) on 13th, and they bred successfully for the first time in Northern Ireland. **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina* are now well established in the Cotswold Water Park (Gloucestershire/Wiltshire), with no fewer than 35 counted there on 21st November.

In England and Scotland, there were seven long-staying **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris*, absent, if at all, for only a few summer months; four sightings for only a few days in May might perhaps refer to some of them on migration; a drake on Lewis in the Western Isles on 8th November seems likely to have been a new arrival. The only female was in Tyne & Wear from January to November; and there were also three short-staying males in Ireland. **Ferruginous Ducks** *A. nyroca*, too, were represented by regulars at Brothers Water (Cumbria) and in Warwickshire, while five others in October may have been a small influx of genuinely wild birds. The regular drake **Lesser Scaup** *A. affinis* was noted at various sites in Co. Down in both winter

periods, but there were new drakes at Rutland Water (Leicestershire) from 14th-17th February, and at Loch of Spiggie (Shetland) from 9th-13th May.

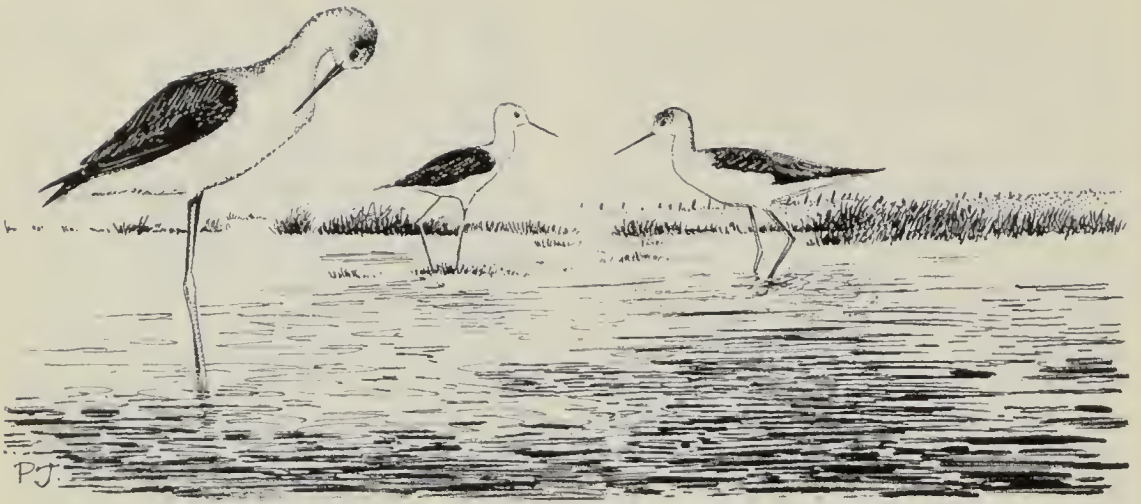
There was an unprecedented influx of more than 200 **Common Eiders** *Somateria mollissima* into the English Midlands from 30th October into November, the main arrival being on 31st October, when there were about 70 in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire alone, and counts of more than 25 at South Muskham (Nottinghamshire), Carsington (Derbyshire) and Pitsford (Northamptonshire). The movement was clearly over quite a wide area as, on the same date, 18 appeared at Oldbury Power Station (Avon), while 18 more turned up on 19th November at Draycote Water (Warwickshire). Larger-than-usual numbers on the Hampshire coast in November and December may also have been connected.

Between two and six drake **King Eiders** *S. spectabilis* frequented the east coast of Scotland through the year, including two on the Ythan (Grampian) in late June, with a further drake more or less resident in Shetland waters; a female was found dead there on 20th January, and a second-winter female was watched from 1st-10th May; and on the West Coast there was a drake off the islands of Tiree (Strathclyde) from 26th April to 7th June and Islay (Strathclyde) on 13th October. Numbers of **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* are almost impossible to untangle, but upwards of a dozen were seen, with up to five together in Fife in both March and December.



Birds of prey to cranes

There were about 20 passage **Honey-buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* through May, with those breeding in Devon and Norfolk returning on 19th and 20th respectively. Autumn passage got under way in late August, with five in the last three days of the month, followed by about 50 in September, the



majority between 13th and 17th, peaking at seven over Minsmere (Suffolk) on 16th. Indeed, the raptor passage over Minsmere that day had a Continental feel, with eight **Common Buzzards** *Buteo buteo* and an **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* as well.

It was a good year for **Black Kites** *Mikrus migrans*, with singles in Norfolk and Essex from 20th April, and four more in southern England before the end of the month. These were followed by six in May and four in June, then singles in Kent in July and August, concluding an excellent year for this species in that county, apparently involving six individuals. As usual, the majority of records of this wandering species had that element of luck, and it is impossible to determine for certain the degree of duplication in the multiple sightings in well-watched Norfolk in April and May.

Wandering **Red Kites** *M. milvus* are rapidly becoming part of the birding scene once again in England and Scotland, following the so-far successful reintroduction schemes. A total of 55 reintroduced kites was counted in January at the English roosts, and several pairs again bred successfully, fledging 21 young in the two countries. There were also a hundred nests in Wales. Sightings of that other reintroduced raptor the **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* are also increasing slowly, though in this case it is perhaps more likely that most sightings away from Scotland are from the increasing Continental population. Three single immatures were seen: in Borders, from 22nd-23rd September; on Skomer (Dyfed) on 10th-11th November; and near Grassington (North Yorkshire) on 30th December. There were, however, very few reports of **Rough-legged Buzzards** *B. lagopus* in either winter period.

The undoubted raptor highlight, indeed one

of the events of the year, was the arrival of no fewer than five **Pallid Harriers** *Circus macrourus*, reflecting a wide scatter in western Europe. Second-summer males were seen in Highland on 5th-7th May, and in Essex on 13th-15th June, a third individual at Puffin Bog (Humberside) on 9th September, a juvenile in the Exnaboe area (Shetland) on 15th-16th September, and a stunning adult male, also on 15th September, at Saddington Reservoir (Leicestershire)*.

Ospreys showed well, as is now expected, with a total of more than 60 on passage in each of April and May, and with a wide geographical scatter, and upwards of a dozen in the summer months in England, before a return passage south in similar numbers to those in spring. Up to 80 pairs were present in Scotland. By contrast, after last year's record influx of **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco tinnunculus*, there were just four in June, one young male and three females, from the Isle of Wight to Norfolk. A white **Gyr Falcon** *F. rusticolus* in the Cairngorms (Grampian) on 14th April must have been an impressive sight.

Following a couple of unseasonably early migrants in the last week of March, there were only small numbers of **Common Quails** *Coturnix coturnix* in the summer, though widely scattered. **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana*, too, were rather thin on the ground, with only about 20 autumn reports; and **Corn Crakes** *Crex crex* continued to cause concern for their future, with very few away from breeding areas. Reports of **Common Cranes** *Grus grus* were also few, though one stayed at Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) from 22nd August to at least 17th October.

* These five records are all still being assessed by the Rarities Committee.

Waders

There was a notable influx of **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* in late April, with a minimum of seven in the period from 20th to 23rd, including a group of three together in Cheshire, which wandered around North Wales and northwest England before settling to nest at Frodsham (Cheshire), though, sadly, a combination of torrential rain at a crucial stage and marauding Magpies *Pica pica* finally ended the attempt. There were fresh arrivals of three singles in May and June, and, finally, one in Northumberland from 31st July to 16th August which is presumed to have moved to north Norfolk, where, after touring various sites, it took up residence into 1994 at Titchwell (and is still present at the time of writing in July 1994).

Pratincoles were represented by yet another **Oriental Pratincole** *Glareola maldivarum*, in north Norfolk, from 14th May to 17th August; and by three **Black-winged Pratincoles** *G. nordmanni*: juveniles in Avon on 28th August and Cornwall on 10th October, and a much-appreciated apparent adult at Great Livermere (Suffolk) from 6th-12th September. But where have all the Collared Pratincoles *G. pratincola* gone?

In an excellent year for waders in Shetland, a **Killdeer Plover** *Charadrius vociferus* there in mid March was a new bird for the islands, though it fell into the established winter pattern. Farther south there were above-average numbers of **Kentish Plovers** *C. alexandrinus*, with some in almost every month. After a small arrival in late March, there was a good series of records, especially from Stanpit Marsh (Dorset) and Ferrybridge (Dorset). Peak numbers were in September, with 14 on 13th, including eight at Ferrybridge and five at Pegwell Bay (Kent). Passage of **Dotterels** *C. morinellus* was typical. After only about ten in April, more than 200 were noted on migration through May, with peaks of 26 on Pendle Hill (Lancashire) on 6th and 40 in Snowdonia (Gwynedd) on 8th; in autumn, there were about 35 returning individuals through September.

South Ferriby (Humberside) hosted both **Pacific Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulvus* and **American Golden Plovers** *P. dominica* in July. One of the latter on South Uist (Western Isles) from 3rd-19th May was unusual, but more typical records came from Co. Cork from 26th September to 10th October and on St Mary's from 14th October to 4th November. A single **Sociable Lapwing** *Chettusia gregaria* which appeared at Egginton (Derbyshire) on 17th April was

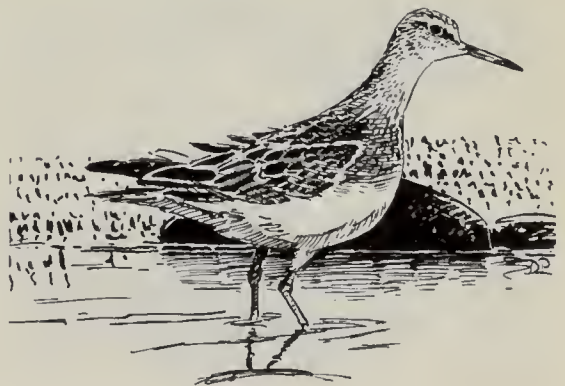
presumably the same as that which toured north Norfolk and Lincolnshire up to 12th June.

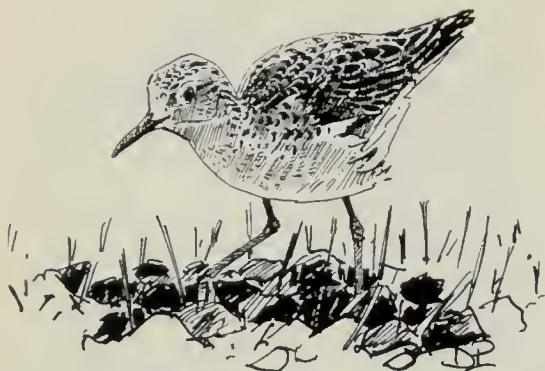
Amongst the smaller waders, **Semi-palmated Sandpipers** *Calidris pusilla* were represented by two singles in spring, in May and June, and two in autumn, an August adult and a September juvenile. There was a juvenile **Least Sandpiper** *C. minutilla* on the Hayle Estuary (Cornwall) from 22nd September to 4th October.

The autumn passage of **Little Stints** *C. minuta* was reported to be the best ever in Ireland, with up to 80 at Ballycotton (Co. Cork) in August. Indeed, there was a good passage through England, too, with double-figure counts widespread, including inland. **Curlew Sandpipers** *C. ferruginea* also passed through in good numbers, though they were generally less obvious than their diminutive relative. The regular autumn wader passage also produced above-average numbers of **Grey Plovers** *P. squatarola* inland.

Temminck's Stints *C. temminckii* also showed well, though typically the main passage was in spring, with about 60 in May, including four together at Hickling (Norfolk) from 6th-9th, and seven on the River Cuckmere (East Sussex) on 8th; indeed, on 8th there was a total of 19 in the country. About 20 in autumn were mostly in the second half of September.

Eight **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* (two in Ireland) appeared from 4th July to 19th September, and three **Baird's Sandpipers** *C. bairdii* were noted in August and September. Both these species were represented in Shetland, and those islands also held a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *C. acuminata* at Scatness on 13th-15th September, as well as, earlier, its commoner relative, the **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos*. It was, however, not a vintage year for our commonest transatlantic wader, with five spring records, then increasing from about eight in July to some 15 in September, half in Ireland, and just a couple in October. On the





other hand, **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis* showed something of a return to form, with about 26 between 22nd August and early October.

Five spring **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* included one on North Uist (Western Isles) on 31st May, and there was an immaculate juvenile at Cley and Blakeney (Norfolk) from 8th-12th September. After one on North Ronaldsay on 17th August, three **Great Snipes** *Gallinago media* appeared in just three days in September, during 17th-19th, on Out Skerries (Shetland), at Filey and at Spurn (Humberside), while another on North Ronaldsay on 4th-5th October appeared the day after a fall there of 45 **Jack Snipes** *Lymnocyrtus minimus*. The five **Long-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* were split between three in Ireland in August and September, and two in Wales and northwest England in October and November.

Returning to Shetland, an **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* on Foula from 22nd September to 6th October was found dead on 18th November, while more typical was another long-stayer on St Mary's, from 6th October to 6th November. Kent held the monopoly on **Marsh Sandpipers** *Tringa stagnatilis*, with singles at Dungeness on 9th May and Cliffe from 22nd July to 21st August, while the only **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes* was at Radipole and Lodmoor (Dorset), from 11th-24th September.

Wintering **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularia* are becoming quite regular, and, after one stayed in Somerset from 1992 to 11th May, the second winter period produced another, in Cambridgeshire, from 7th October into 1994.

It was not a good year for phalaropes, with, surprisingly, no **Wilson's Phalaropes** *Phalaropus tricolor*, only about 20 passage **Red-necked Phalaropes** *P. lobatus*, mostly in September, and rather few reports of **Grey Phalaropes** *P. fulicatus*.

Skuas to auks

It is sometimes difficult to decide whether the scarcer skuas really are becoming more frequent off our coasts, or whether it is a reflection of increased seawatching and better identification skills. Be that as it may, both **Pomarine** *Stercorarius pomarinus* and **Long-tailed Skua** *S. longicaudus* numbers were again high.

In spring, 285 **Pomarine Skuas** flew east at Bowness-on-Solway (Cumbria) between 16th April and the end of May, while there was a total of over 400 elsewhere, with a strong passage along the English Channel coast, including good counts of 43 and 44 past Dungeness on 8th and 9th May, and off Devon and Cornwall from 16th-18th; peak numbers off the Irish east coast were on 22nd, while 52 passed Aird an Runair, North Uist, on 18th, the day of an amazing passage there of 1,253 **Long-tailed Skuas**. There were only about a further dozen Long-tails in spring.

Numbers of **Pomarine Skuas** picked up again in August, mainly from 21st, followed by about 500 in September, with a good movement down the North Sea coasts from 3rd to 5th; some 300 in October included notable movements on 14th in the Thames, with 39 off Canvey (Essex), and on 21st in the Northeast, 85 passing Hound Point (Lothian) and 29 passing Spurn. There were few late in the year.

After a dozen **Long-tailed Skuas** in July, there were more than 150 in August, again mostly from 21st, with 32 reported on 22nd from 14 sites, and 20 off Witham (Lincolnshire) on 30th; then perhaps 200 in September, following the same pattern as Pomarine Skua; though, in sharp contrast to that species, there were only about ten in October, including four off Sheringham (Norfolk) on 21st.

Most **Sabine's Gulls** *Larus sabini* were noted between the second half of August and the first half of October, a rather meagre total of about 130: one inland at Daventry Reservoir (Northamptonshire) on 9th October was perhaps the most unexpected. Some 150 to 200 **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* were present in both winter periods, with fewer in the spring and early summer, though still well represented in most months. Northern Ireland's first **Yellow-legged Gull** *L. cachiinnans* was found at Groomsport (Co. Down) on 15th June, while a large roost in Pagham Harbour (West Sussex) in early August of this increasing species peaked at about 200.

In a poor year for American gulls, there were just single **Franklin's** *L. pipixcan* and **Bonaparte's Gulls** *L. philadelphia* at, respectively, Black Rock Strand (Co. Kerry), from 7th-11th May (the first Irish Franklin's), and Marazion (Cornwall), from 31st January to 6th February, while there were no accepted **Laughing Gulls** *L. atricilla*. **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* peaked at 90 in February, and of about 60 in March most were in southwest England and Ireland, with a maximum of ten at Blemerville (Co. Kerry) on 1st. There appeared to be fewer in the second winter period, with around 35 reported in December.

The gales at the start of the year brought record numbers of **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoideus* to Shetland, with between 150 and 200 estimated in the islands. These included a moribund adult female of the race *kumlienii*, picked up on 15th January. Four further singles of this race in the first three months included singles at Plymouth (Devon), and two in northeast Scotland. Elsewhere, numbers of Iceland Gulls remained high, with about 30 still around in May. Few stayed the summer, and numbers did not pick up again until the second half of November. There was a noticeable increase after Christmas, especially inland, with at least 80 reported in December. **Glaucous Gull** *L. hyperboreus* was much scarcer, peaking at fewer than 100 in February, though numbers at the end of the year were similar to those of Iceland Gull.

No doubt influenced by the same gales which brought all the Iceland Gulls, there was an unprecedented arrival from the Arctic of three adult **Ross's Gulls** *Rhodostethia rosea* at Fraserburgh (Grampian) on 17th-26th, 23rd-26th and 24th-30th January respectively, with further singles at North Shields (Tyne & Wear) on 30th and Stornoway (Western Isles) from 31st to 3rd February. At the other end of the year, there were adults at Skaw, Unst, from 21st September to 6th October and off Monifieth, Tay Estuary (Tayside), on 31st December. Although there were no associated **Ivory Gulls** *Pagophila eburnea* early in the year, two first-winters were in Shetland from 12th December, one staying at Lerwick (Shetland) from 14th to 29th, and there was an adult on North Uist on 29th December.

Gales in the North Sea in late January caused a mass movement of thousands of **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla*, 1,000 of these passing through the London area on 25th.

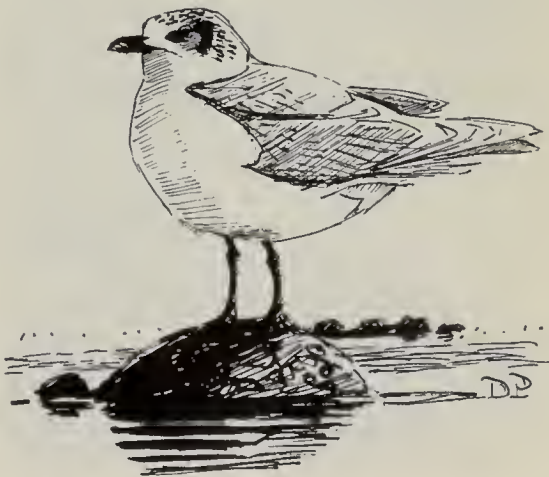
It was a good year for the elusive **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica*, with four widely scattered between 29th April and 5th

October, on the English, Welsh and Irish coasts. **Caspian Terns** *Sterna caspia* appeared in May and July, and seawatchers at Sheringham on 22nd August were astounded to see both Caspian and **Lesser Crested Terns** *S. bengalensis*. The usual female Lesser Crested Tern had returned to the Farne Islands on 3rd May.

Forster's Tern *S. forsteri* remained true to form, with one returning to Co. Wexford in March-April, and **Bridled Terns** *S. anaethetus* continue to appear, with one roosting overnight at Rye Harbour (East Sussex), from 16th-17th May, and others at Earls Barton (Northamptonshire) on 29th May and Isle of Eigg, near Rhum (Highland), on 21st July. But where are all the Sooty Terns *S. fuscata*?

There were two **Whiskered Terns** *Chlidonias hybridus* in June and July, and 14 **White-winged Black Terns** *C. leucopterus*, most in May, June and September. Away from southeast England, passage of **Black Terns** *C. niger* was poor, but 10th and 11th May saw good numbers along the Sussex and Suffolk coasts, with 389 and 183, respectively.

A **Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia* at Musselburgh (Lothian), watched by a few lucky observers for just half an hour on 27th March, was the first 'live' Scottish mainland record. A count of 101 **Little Auks** *Alle alle* past Anstruther (Fife) on 24th January was the only significant number in the first winter period. After eight past Barns Ness (Lothian) on 7th October, there were a further 400 or so in the month, 325 of these off North Ronaldsay in the last four days of the month, 33 off Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) on 24th being the only double-figure count south of the Border. Fewer than 100 were reported away from North Ronaldsay in the rest of the year.



Near-passerines



Totals of 450 and 219 **Rose-ringed Parakeets** *Psittacula krameri* going to roost over Wraysbury (Berkshire) on 28th September and nearby Shepperton (Surrey) on 6th December may have been the largest-ever counts in Britain, though more exciting to rarity-seekers was the first-summer **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* on St Martin's from 11th March to 1st April.

Away from Shetland, where one female remained, there were **Snowy Owls** *Nyctea scandiaca* in Highland in January and September, Orkney in July, and on Aranmore Island (Co. Donegal) on 24th June, while the Western Isles played host to a 'pair' in April: unfortunately, the male was on St Kilda and the female in the Uists. Unusually, no **Long-eared Owls** *Asio otus* were seen on Fair Isle (Shetland) in October, suggesting at best a late autumn immigration. In the first winter period at least, **Short-eared Owls** *A. flammeus* were seen in good numbers, and there was a record 12 pairs breeding on the island of Skomer.

Another candidate for bird of the year must be the **Pacific Swift** *Apus pacificus* which stayed at Cley for several hours on 30th May, enabling many birders to get there in time. A **Pallid Swift** *A. pallidus* at Howth Head (Co. Dublin) on 9th August, found dead later that same day, is the first accepted Irish record (though an earlier one is pending). **Alpine Swifts** *A. melba* put in a strong showing in early spring, with 16 between 21st March and 13th June, half of these by 16th April, north to Kintyre (Strathclyde). Four autumn records complete the picture.

Fifteen **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* dazzled in the second half of May, well spread, and there were upwards of a dozen in June, most in the first week, as far north as Skye (Highland), the only report of more than one being of two together at Canterbury

(Kent) on 21st. The only **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* was an adult, videoed at South Gare (Cleveland) on 11th September.

Following the record of a **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* wintering in Bournemouth (Dorset), about 60 were recorded on spring passage, including, unusually, two together in Tayside on 25th March. Autumn passage saw about 40, half of them in October, and the year ended with three wintering, in Hampshire (taken into care on 30th December), Norfolk and Strathclyde.

After three singles in April, over 40 **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* were reported in May, more than half on 10th-12th on the English east coast, including five at Flamborough on 10th. Autumn passage began in August, mostly from 21st; then some 125 were recorded in September, well spread throughout the month, and concentrated in the English southwest, the North Sea coastal counties and the Northern Isles, followed by a couple of dozen in October.

Larks to wagtails

Four **Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* were seen in Co. Cork between late April and early June, with 12 more in Britain, mostly Scotland, in the same period. The only autumn reports were of singles in Shetland in September and in Scilly in October. About 60 wintering **Horned Larks** *Eremophila alpestris* in March included counts of 20 at Titchwell (Norfolk) and 22 at Staithes (North Yorkshire). Six still lingered in May, with the last one on North Ronaldsay on 3rd June. Autumn arrivals appeared from 9th October, with some 25 that month, increasing to 40-50 wintering.

The main numbers of all three of our breeding hirundines were late in arriving and remained depressed throughout the summer, with both **Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* and

House Martins *Delichon urbica* having poor breeding success. It was also a poor year by recent standards for vagrant **Red-rumped Swallows** *H. daurica*, with just three spring and two autumn sightings.

A **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* found at Mow Cop (Staffordshire) on 14th March remained to 4th April, while another was at Loch Kennard (Tayside) on 27th March. Autumn passage was unexceptional, with around 30 in September, mainly from 14th, and over 40 in October. There were five

Tawny Pipits *A. campestris* reported in May, then about 35 in autumn from 29th August, almost all on the English south coast. By contrast, 1993 proved to be another exceptional autumn for **Olive-backed Pipits** *A. hodgsoni*, especially in Shetland, where there was an amazing total of 17 in the period 29th September to 10th October, with a further late bird there on 24th; elsewhere, there was only a single on Orkney, seven in North Sea coastal counties, one on Cape Clear Island on 17th October, and a further four in southwest England, all in October.

Pechora Pipits *A. gustavi* were seen on Foula (Shetland) from 27th-29th September, and, exceptionally, on the Scottish mainland at St Fergus (Grampian) on 11th October. Eight

Red-throated Pipits *A. cervinus* fell neatly into two groups of four, on 17th-19th September, from Fair Isle to Essex, and in late September and early October, from Fair Isle to Scilly. More than 10,000 of its common cousin, the **Meadow Pipit** *A. pratensis*, passed through South Walney (Cumbria) on 23rd September. A male **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* at Fleet Pond (Hampshire) in mid May attracted large crowds, though autumn produced just three singles in August, from 19th, and one in September on Fair Isle.

Waxwings to thrushes

There were very few **Bohemian Waxwings** *Bombicilla garrulus* in the first winter period, the peak count being of 14 at Flamborough on 21st March. The autumn proved only a little better, with around 40, all singles or in small parties, in October from 21st. Numbers in Aberdeen peaked at 30 on 19th November, and elsewhere there were about 60 in November in total, numbers declining towards the end of the year.

An **Alpine Accentor** *Prunella collaris* on Lundy (Devon) turned up on the typical date of 8th May. Four **Thrush Nightingales** *Luscinia luscinia* in the last 12 days of May were all in Scotland, and included a male in song at

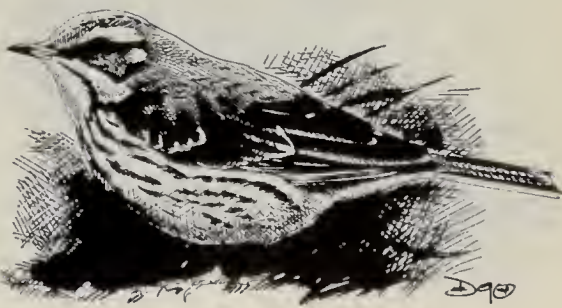
Lerwick; and, on return passage, one was trapped at Heysham (Lancashire) on 25th September. A **Rufous Nightingale** *L. megarhynchos* apparently of one of the eastern races was at Kenfig (Mid Glamorgan) on the very late date of 6th November.

One of the delights of May was an East Coast arrival of **Bluethroats** *L. svecica*, the largest influx in northeast England since 1985 (plate 119). There were about 175 in May, peak numbers being on 11th and 12th, with 30 on the Farn Islands on 11th and 15 on the Isle of May (Fife) on 12th. Return passage from 13th September saw about 60 in September and October.

The year 1993 will be remembered by most twitchers as 'The Year of the Bluetail'. After a **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* on Fair Isle on 16th September whetted the appetite, unbelievably another turned up in the south of England, in an accessible spot, and stayed for ten days! Winspit (Dorset) was the site, from 30th October to 8th November.

A good spring passage of **Black Redstarts** *Phoenicurus ochruros* took place in March and April, with double figures in Suffolk on 1st and 2nd April. An individual of one of the eastern races was reported at Portland on 26th May. Males apparently of one of the eastern races of **Common Redstart** *P. phoenicurus* were seen at Southwold (Suffolk) on 15th September and at Flamborough Head on 17th September. **Common Stonechats** *Saxicola torquata* of the race *maura/stejnegeri*, known as Siberian Stonechats, are now regular visitors and were recorded from the second half of September, with four in that month, and 12 in October, nine of these in the Northern Isles; finally, one was in Kent on 1st November.

The early spring passage of **Northern Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* was concentrated in the West: there was a high total of about 150 through Avon by the end of March, but none through Gibraltar Point that month. Two typical records of **Pied Wheatears** *O. pleschanka* concerned a female at Donmouth (Aberdeen) on 8th October, and a male on



Ramsey Island (Dyfed) on 25th October. Less expected, but most welcome, was an immature male **Black-eared Wheatear** *O. hispanica* at Stiffkey (Norfolk) from 24th October to 1st November, which filled a gap on a lot of lists. Also much admired was a female **Desert Wheatear** *O. deserti*, looking incongruous in the snow at Hunstanton and Heacham (Norfolk) from 16th November to 7th December. Earlier, there had been another, on 29th October at Horsey (Norfolk).

A remarkable record was of a **White's Thrush** *Zoothera dauma* trapped at Copeland Bird Observatory (Co. Down) on 16th April and staying to 20th. But there were more to come, with singles on St Kilda on 21st September and at Lerwick on 1st October, both, as is more usual, single-day birds.

After a few poor Octobers, Scilly returned to form this year, especially with members of the thrush family. Chief highlight was a rather elusive **Hermit Thrush** *Catharus guttatus* on Tresco on 11th and 15th-18th October, but more obliging were an **Eyebrowed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* on St Mary's, from 7th-14th October, with perhaps the same individual on St Agnes, on 15th-16th October, and a **Dark-throated Thrush** *T. ruficollis* of the black-throated race *atroregularis* on St Martin's on 13th-14th October. Three more of this race were seen in October: two in Shetland and one at Sheringham on 31st. A **Swainson's Thrush** *C. ustulatus* trapped at Holm (Orkney) on 21st October was the only one of the autumn.

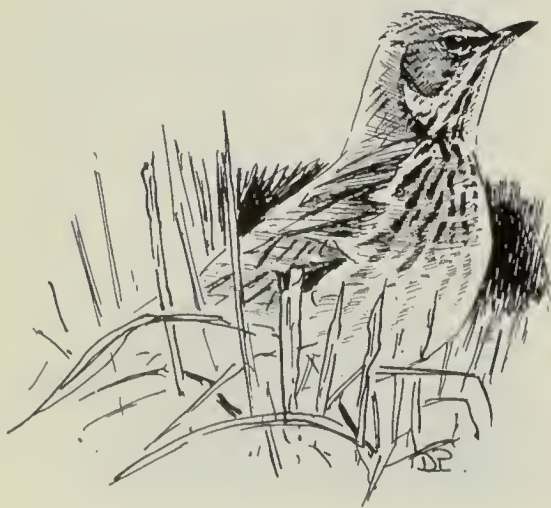
There was a good passage of **Ring Ouzels** *T. torquatus* on 10th October, with more than 60 at two sites in Sussex alone, but numbers of **Fieldfares** *T. pilaris* and **Redwings** *T. iliacus* remained unremarkable, the main arrival taking place in mid October.

Warblers

The year 1993 proved to be outstanding for the rarer warblers, in both variety and numbers. After two typical September Shetland records of **Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata*, one at Sheringham on 29th, which actually showed itself to those present, was most unexpected. An excellent year for warblers on Fair Isle started in the spring, with **River Warbler** *L. fluviatilis*, **Savi's Warbler** *L. luscinioides* and **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*, all in May. There was another River Warbler there on 26th-27th September, with a third Shetland record for the year on Out Skerries on 9th-10th October. Minsmere held up to three singing **Savi's Warblers** from 23rd April into May, and another at Red Rocks (Merseyside) on 23rd May was unusual. September **Paddyfield Warblers** included another, inevitably on Fair Isle, and a first-winter which came aboard a fishing boat 400 km southwest of Ireland on 14th, and died a few days later.

There were about 12 **Aquatic Warblers** *A. paludicola* in August, all bar two in the period 10th-19th, followed by just five in September, with one on Whalsay (Shetland) on 20th-21st being very far north, and finally one at Titchfield Haven (Hampshire) on 2nd October. **Blyth's Reed Warblers** *A. dumetorum* are becoming increasingly regular: following one on North Ronaldsay on 19th May, there were no fewer than six in autumn between 19th September and 29th October, two of these at Fagbury Cliff (Suffolk) and two in Shetland. Small numbers of passage **Marsh Warblers** *A. palustris* appeared in both spring and autumn, but of greater note were 19 **Reed Warblers** *A. scirpaceus* on North Ronaldsay in early October, with several more elsewhere in Orkney and Shetland. There was, inevitably, a **Great Reed Warbler** *A. arundinaceus* in Shetland, at Geosetter on 22nd May, as well as two singing in Kent in late May, and another in Norfolk in June; less usual was one in October at Bamburgh (Northumberland) on 3rd.

Hot on the heels of the record five in 1992, no fewer than 12 **Booted Warblers** *Hippolais caligata* appeared, spread from Scilly to Shetland, nine in September from 7th, of which five were in the period from 16th to 20th. Others later were on St Martin's from 19th-27th October, at Seafeld (Shetland), apparently of the race *rama*, from 22nd October to 9th November, and at Newtonhill (Grampian) from 23rd October to 19th November, accompanied by an **Icterine Warbler** *H. icterina*. In spring there were 23 of



this latter species from 10th May to 6th June, split between the English east coast and the Northern Isles. Autumn passage commenced with about a dozen in the last week of August on the English south and east coasts, followed by some 60 in September, especially in the period from 14th to 19th, and about 14 in October. It was a rather average year for **Melodious Warblers** *H. polyglotta*, with about five in spring in late May and early June, then in autumn a couple of dozen, nearly all, as usual, in the Southwest.

Britain's third **Marmora's Warbler** *Sylvia sarda*, a singing male, frequented St Abb's Head (Borders) from 23rd-27th May, while there were plenty of out-of-place **Dartford Warblers** *S. undata* at both ends of the year on the coasts, as far north as Gwent in the west and Suffolk in the east. At least eight were wintering along the Sussex coast in the first winter period, and a similar number was in that county in October/November, while Scilly had four in the course of the year.

It was also an excellent year for **Subalpine Warblers** *S. cantillans*, with a total of eight, all males, in April, and ten (four of them females) in May, including two at Landguard (Suffolk) on 28th; after a single male on Shetland in June, there were singles in each of August and September, and finally three more, all males, in mid October. **Desert Warblers** *S. nana* in Britain occur typically in late autumn or winter, so a male in song on Blakeney Point from 27th May to 1st June attracted large crowds. About 80 **Barred Warblers** *S. nisoria* ranged from late August through to the last day of November, though three-quarters were in September.

Sardinian Warblers *S. melanocephala* seem to be found increasingly often: the first and second records for Ireland were in Co. Cork in April, while a male at Dungeness on 28th-29th May and a female at Portland Bill on 2nd June were not too far apart in space and time. It is interesting to speculate on what might happen if a pair should meet up well out of range, as long stays, such as that by a first-summer male at Filey from 27th June to 16th October, are typical of this species.

Greenish Warblers *Phylloscopus trochiloides* seem to have changed their peak time of occurrence from August/September to May/June. Four of the seven records were in these early summer months, with just two in the last few days of August, and a late single on Cape Clear Island on 19th October. The very similar **Arctic Warbler** *P. borealis* remains essentially an autumn speciality, and,

of the 13 from 26th August to October, seven were in Shetland, the most unusual locality being Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire) from 8th-11th September. There were just three **Bonelli's Warblers** *P. bonelli*, from mid August to late September.

It was not a vintage year for the mercurial **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** *P. proregulus*. There were only about 15 in October, all on the North Sea coast, with a further 14 in November, the last on Lundy on 12th. The other Far Eastern *Phylloscopus* warblers, however, arrived in pretty good numbers. After the first **Yellow-browed Warbler** *P. inornatus* of the autumn at Filey on 10th September, there were a further 130 or so in September, with the majority in the Northern Isles, and in the last week, followed by some 150 in October, especially in the first week, and including good numbers in Ireland. Eight stragglers in November, only two after 6th, included individuals apparently of the race *humei* at Flamborough from 5th-9th, and at Strumble Head (Dyfed) on 20th. Earlier in the year, three Yellow-broweds had appeared in March in the southwest of Ireland and England. There were four **Radde's Warblers** *P. schwarzi*, two each in October and November, well outnumbered by the 11 **Dusky Warblers** *P. fuscatus*: of seven in October, six were either in the Northern or the Western Isles, while four in the first five days of November ranged from Shetland to Kent.

Flycatchers to starlings

After two singles in June, **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* were widespread in autumn, with just under 100 reported between late August and the first week of November, half of these in October. Kent has a virtual monopoly on British records of **Short-toed Treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla*, so a first-winter trapped at Dungeness on 19th September conformed to the pattern. **Penduline Tits** *Remiz pendulinus* still promise more than they deliver: there were just a couple of reports from suitable breeding sites in East Anglia in spring and summer, with





eight in the south in October and November. The vast majority of passage **Golden Orioles** *Oriolus oriolus* were in the second half of May and first week of June, with well over 100 reported, about a quarter in Scilly.

Two typical **Isabelline Shrikes** *Lanius isabellinus* frequented Worth (Kent) from 24th October to 4th November, and Fife Ness (Fife) from 4th-9th November. We have now seemingly lost breeding **Red-backed Shrikes** *L. collurio* for good, so those on passage have become even more significant. On both migrations there were excellent numbers, with a spring total of about 100 between mid May and early June, about a third of these through Shetland, then about 75 in autumn, mostly in September, but with roughly 20 in the first half of October, and very few of those in autumn being in Shetland. A total of four **Lesser Grey Shrikes** *L. minor* was good: two in May, followed by one near St David's (Dyfed) on 24th June, moving to Skomer from 2nd-4th July; then in autumn a late one at Skaw, Unst, from 30th September to 3rd October. A dozen or so **Great Grey Shrikes** *L. excubitor* wintered at both ends of the year, but a similar total passed through Orkney in April. The first of the autumn arrived on 17th September, when singles were seen at both Spurn and Walberswick (Suffolk), though the majority of those in autumn were in October, when 24 were seen; one of the steppe race *pallidirostris* (a potential split) was present from 23rd-28th September at Swindon (Wiltshire). It was an excellent year for **Woodchat Shrikes** *L. senator*, with a total of 29, well spread throughout the summer: after four in late April, seven were reported in May, four of these in the period 14th-18th; these

were followed by two in early and four in late June, three in the first half of August, five in September, and four in the first half of October. Most were in the South and West.

Two **Red-billed Choughs** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* at Crail (Fife) on 7th February provided only the second regional record this century, while a **Common Raven** *Corvus corax* in the same region on 24th January was the first since 1927; more significantly, a pair of Common Ravens nested in the Avon Gorge (Avon) for the first time since 1950, and a single at Landguard Point on 29th October was well out of its present-day range. A total of eight juvenile **Rosy Starlings** *Sturnus roseus* in September and October included one well west on Cape Clear Island, and another at Mullion (Cornwall) which stayed into 1994.

Sparrows to buntings

Perhaps the highlight of another excellent year on North Ronaldsay was the male **Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis* trapped there on 11th August, and present to 19th, though this was preceded by one at Martin's Haven (Dyfed) on 18th May.

Red-eyed Vireos *Vireo olivaceus* seldom fail to put in an appearance in early October, and this year was no exception, with singles on Bryher and Gugh (Scilly) and at Penberth (Cornwall). Quite good numbers of **Bramblings** *Fringilla montifringilla* in the first winter period included a flock of 1,000 in Cornwall, and, though October arrival was poor, there was a flock of 1,200 near Lakenheath (Suffolk) late in the year. **Siskins** *Carduelis spinus* were numerous at both ends of the year, with a strong autumn passage, especially through October, from Shetland to Scilly and the Channel Islands, where more than 2,000 were recorded on both Jersey and Guernsey on peak days.

About 60 **European Serins** *Serinus serinus* from March to June were mostly on the English south coast from Dorset to Kent, with Portland particularly favoured. By contrast, there were only around 15 reports in the whole of the second half of the year. All nine **Arctic Redpolls** *C. hornemanni* were in the Northern Isles, singles on Fair Isle from 31st January to 6th February, and from 31st May to 1st June, with the remaining seven in October and November (plate 120). It was a poor year generally for movements of **Common Crossbills** *Loxia curvirostra*, though that other red finch, the **Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus*, continues to do well. After around 50 in May, at first mainly in the Northern Isles, with most of

those on the English east coast being in the last week of the month, there were a further 20 or so in June, on British east, south and west coasts, mostly in the first five days. Migration recommenced in autumn in early September, with more than 50 sightings in that month, though only ten of these were away from the Northern Isles; passage continued with about 20 in October, nearly all in the first half, with a peak of three at Flamborough Head on 14th.

A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Dendroica coronata* was on Cape Clear Island from 7th-15th October. The only other American warbler to appear was **Blackpoll Warbler** *D. striata*, with singles at Brownstown Head (Co. Waterford) on 3rd October, and at Flamborough Head on the English east coast from 24th October to 1st November. The wintering **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* remained in Willingham Woods (Lincolnshire) to 28th March from 1992, while a male **Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis* appeared in a Dorchester (Dorset) garden from 7th-19th November.

Only small numbers of **Lapland Longspurs** *Calcarius lapponicus* were reported in the first winter period, but there was a good passage from mid September and throughout October in the Northern Isles and down the English east coast, with ones and twos heard flying over, calling, in several inland counties, and an impressive peak of 400 at Flamborough on 27th October.

A total of eight **Ortolan Buntings** *Emberiza hortulana* from the end of April to early June included one in Richmond Park (Greater London) on 7th-9th May; but these were totally eclipsed by an excellent autumn passage of well over 80 along the South and East Coasts, 70 of these in September, and four as far west as Cape Clear Island on 8th. It was also a bumper year for **Rustic Buntings** *Emberiza rustica* (plate 122) on both spring and

autumn passages. After single March and April records, there were 12 from 9th May to 1st June; in autumn there were 28 from mid September to October, with few after the first nine days of the latter month, 18 of the 28 being in Shetland, and a single in November.

Wintering **Little Buntings** *Emberiza pusilla* are now a regular feature, two singles being found in February, in Surrey and Oxfordshire. There were just four records in May, but a good autumn passage (plate 121) involved some 34 individuals, 16 in September, 13 in October and five in November, exactly half in Shetland, with one on Stronsay (Orkney) staying from late October to the end of the year, and finally one found in Merseyside on Boxing Day, which stayed into the new year.

It is amazing that Shetland, with one of its best years ever for rare and scarce migrants, failed to score with **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola*, all the more so when there were five in England in the first half of September, including one for three days at Portland from 8th-10th; in fact, the only one found in the Northern Isles was on Stronsay on 20th-21st. There were two more to come in England: one on St Mary's on 1st October, and another at Bolberry Down (Devon) on 7th November.

A mass arrival of nine **Black-headed Buntings** *Emberiza melanocephala*, all males, took place from 24th May to 7th June from Kent and Cornwall to Cambridgeshire and Islay; indeed, four were in the two southwestern counties of Devon and Cornwall. Most were short-stayers, though that on Islay was seen from 7th June to 4th July. A tenth male was seen twice in July on Harris and Lewis (Western Isles) to complete an impressive year for this species, bettered only by 1992; and there was also one on Guernsey in June. Finally, many enjoyed the young male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* on Tresco from 12th-14th October.

Acknowledgments

We are most grateful to the numerous individual correspondents, regional, county and local societies, and bird observatories, whose information has been used to compile this summary. We are especially grateful to Rare Bird News, which supplied copies of all the records reported to its phone service, and to Birding South West. Peter Lansdown, John Marchant and Mike Rogers helped greatly by cross-checking this text with that of the forthcoming Rarities Committee report. Unless otherwise stated, records of major rarities have been included only if they have been accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee, the Irish Rare Birds Committee or the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, as appropriate: we are most grateful to all three bodies for their full co-operation.

Ian Dawson, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL

Keith Allsopp, 137 Redbridge, Stantonbury, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK14 6DL



119. Above, male red-spotted Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica svecica*, Holme, Norfolk, May 1993 (*R. Chittenden*)

120. Below, Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 11th October 1993 (*M. Gray*)





221. Above, Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*, Filey, North Yorkshire, November 1993 (Steve Young/ Birdwatch)

22. Below, Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, St Mary's, Scilly, 17th-18th October 1993 (Steve Young/ Birdwatch)



The 'British Birds' Best Bird Book of the Year



For the benefit of those who may wish to acquire (or give as a present) just one of the many bird books published each year, *British Birds* selects annually its choice of the 'Best Bird Book of the Year' from those reviewed in the journal during the previous 12 months. The winner may, in one year, be an important, erudite scientific treatise and, in another, a lighter, less academic work, but it will always be reliable, well produced and thoroughly worthy of inclusion in any birdwatcher's library.

Our choice for BEST BIRD BOOK OF 1994 is:

**The New Atlas of Breeding
Birds in Britain
and Ireland 1988-1991.**

**Compiled by
David Wingfield Gibbons,
James B. Reid
& Robert A. Chapman.**

T. & A. D. Poyser, London,
1993. £40.00.

(Review: *Brit. Birds* 87: 221-222)

**The New Atlas of Breeding Birds
in Britain and
Ireland:
1988-1991**

David Wingfield Gibbons
James B. Reid
Robert A. Chapman



British Trust for Ornithology Scottish Ornithologists' Club Irish Wildbird Conservancy

We also wish especially to draw attention to three other top-class bird books published in a vintage year for county avifaunas:

The Birds of Buckinghamshire. Edited by Peter Lack & David Ferguson. Buckinghamshire Bird Club, Burnham, 1993. £11.95. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 86: 595-596)

Birds of Hampshire. Edited by J. M. Clark & J. A. Eyre. Hampshire Ornithological Society, Fleet, 1993. £22.50. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 87: 280-282)

The Breeding Birds of Hertfordshire. Edited by K. W. Smith, C. W. Dee, J. D. Fearnside, E. W. Fletcher & R. N. Smith. Hertfordshire Natural History Society, Potters Bar, 1993. £22.00. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 87: 179-180)

Removal of Citril Finch from the British & Irish List



Alan Knox, on behalf of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

On 29th January 1904, J. Quinton, a local birdeatcher, caught a small finch on the Denes at Caistor (now Caister), just north of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. The bird, subsequently identified as a Citril Finch *Serinus citrinella*, was kept alive for a few days. It was then prepared as a mounted specimen by T. E. Gunn of Norwich, one of the best-known taxidermists of the period. E. C. Saunders, who was in possession of the bird for a short time, told the ornithologist J. H. Gurney about it (Gurney 1905). Gurney saw the specimen himself and was 'responsible for its identification'. This could mean that it was he who identified it or, more likely, that he confirmed the identification to his own satisfaction. Gurney noted that the bird had been 'an adult female in good feather'. Shortly after stuffing, the specimen passed to the collection of Sir Vauncey Harpur Crewe and, on the dispersal of that collection, the bird was purchased and presented to the Booth Museum in Brighton, where it remains (plate 123; case no. 460, reg. no. 208113; Booth & Griffith 1927). The species was admitted to the British List by Howard Saunders on the basis of Gurney's claim (Saunders 1907).

No published description, photograph or biometrics of the bird have been located, nor is there any record of the specimen having been examined critically since Gurney's time. Citril Finch remained on the British & Irish List (in category B) on the basis of the Great Yarmouth specimen alone.

The record was recently reassessed as part of an ongoing review of some older records and of species currently in category B in particular. At the same time as the Committee was gathering information before examining the skin, Lee Evans reported to me (verbally) that he had seen recent photographs of the bird and that it did not appear to be a Citril Finch. Shortly afterwards, I received from Dr Gerald Legg at the Booth Museum some black-and-white



123. Cape (or Yellow-crowned) Canary *Serinus canicollis* from near Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, in January 1904, previously identified as a Citril Finch *S. citrinella* and the sole British record of the latter species (A. G. Knox)

photographs which confirmed Lee Evans's suspicions. I visited Brighton and tentatively identified the skin as that of a Cape (or Yellow-crowned) Canary *S. canicollis*, and was able to verify this when I took the specimen to The Natural History Museum at Tring, where it was further identified as a male (based on plumage characters) of the *canicollis* group of subspecies.

Description

Forecrown, centre of throat, breast, belly, flanks and undertail-coverts bright green, vent whitish; sides of throat and neck, ear-coverts, hindercrown and nape grey, mixed with green on back and scapulars; rump and uppertail-coverts bright green; wing and tail feathers blackish with broad green feather edges; underside of tail greyish, washed strongly with green. Tips of tail feathers lightly soiled, appar-

ently with droppings. Bill stout, with curved culmen and tomia and heavy mandible.

Measurements

Wing 76 mm; tail 54 mm, shallowly forked, with shortest tail feather 7 mm shorter than longest; bill 8.5 mm to feathering, 11.2 mm to skull, 6.5 mm deep, 5.5 mm wide at base.

Discussion

The absence of clear wing-bars, the heavy, bulging bill, the greenish underside to the tail, and the bill and tail biometrics rule out Citril Finch and confirm the identification of the bird as Cape Canary; females are less brightly coloured and have brownish backs and streaked crowns.

Cape Canary and Citril Finch are part of a superspecies which also contains the Island Canary *S. caudaria* and the European Serin *S. serinus* (Hall & Moreau 1970). Superficially, some races of Cape Canary are rather similar to Citril Finch, and confusion is perhaps understandable. The most obvious distinguishing features are the former's heavy, bulging bill and the latter's clearer wing-bars. Some races of Cape Canary have well-marked wing-bars, but these races do not have clear grey 'shawls'.

At an earlier stage, the Great Yarmouth 'Citril Finch' was in a case with



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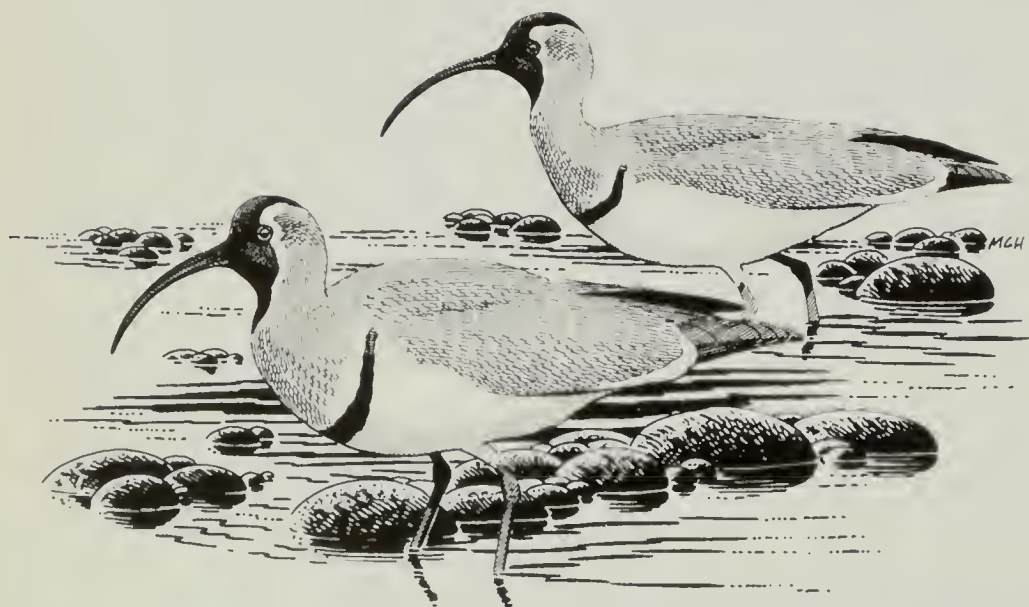
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some other birds at the Booth Museum. The possibility of specimens being switched by mistake was investigated and ruled out by Jeremy Adams at the Museum. There are no contemporary descriptions or measurements of the Great Yarmouth bird to indicate that the finch trapped in 1904 was different from the specimen now under consideration, apart from the original identification as a female. Furthermore, the likelihood of a Cape Canary being mistaken for a Citril Finch is fairly high. Cape Canaries were in demand as cage birds in Britain in the 1880s, and one was caught at Brighton Racecourse in 1886 ('Grey-necked Serin', see Booth & Griffith 1927: 270). The species is not considered to be a likely candidate for natural vagrancy to Britain.

Following the reidentification of the specimen, the record is clearly no longer acceptable, and the species has been deleted from the British & Irish List (BOU in press). There are very few records of Citril Finches as vagrants at any great distance from their known breeding areas. It may be an opportune time for the reassessment of some of the other, particularly older, occurrences elsewhere in Europe.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful for the assistance of Dr Gerald Legg and Jeremy Adams at the Booth Museum during the reconsideration of this record, to The Natural History Museum for access to the collections and library at Tring, and to Lee Evans for his initial warning that all might not be as claimed. I. K. Dawson, R. A. Hume, T. P. Inskipp, J. H. Marchant and Dr D. T. Parkin provided useful comments on the manuscript.

Summary

Citril Finch *Serinus citrinella* was on the British & Irish List on the basis of a single specimen from near Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, in January 1904. The specimen, now at the Booth Museum in Brighton, has been reidentified as a Cape (or Yellow-crowned) Canary *S. canicollis*. The record is clearly no longer acceptable and Citril Finch has been deleted from the British & Irish List.

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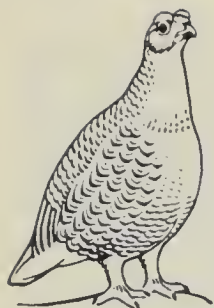
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Dr Alan G. Knox, Buckinghamshire County Museum, Tring Road,
 Halton, Buckinghamshire HP22 5PJ



Twenty-five years ago...

Not a single Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* was found in Britain and Ireland in October 1969 (despite there having been 18 in 1968), nor were there any Radde's Warblers *P. schwarzi*. No Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* was observed on land either, the only one of the autumn being found dead on Seven Stones Light Vessel off the Isles of Scilly. There were, however, over 50 Richard's Pipits *Anthus novaeseelandiae*.



Reviews

Where to Watch Birds in Ireland. By Clive Hutchinson. Christopher Helm Publishers, London, 1994. 257 pages; 31 line-drawings; numerous maps. ISBN 0-7136-3827-3. Paperback £10.99.

Five years after publication of his definitive *Birds in Ireland*, Clive Hutchinson's prolific pen has produced a long-awaited guide to the best birding places in the Emerald Isle (north and south). It benefits from an uncluttered layout, clear maps and attractive line-drawings by Wexford's Dave Daley, whose work gets better and better. Now, for the first time, one can get the full picture on not just the classic Irish hotspots such as Tacumshin and The Old Head of Kinsale, but tantalising details of the places which are more obscure, and potentially rewarding. Clive quite rightly encourages readers to try these, and to seek out birds where others have not looked.

There are, however, some missed opportunities. It would have helped to have had maps and more information about, for example, Carnsore Point in Co. Wexford, grossly underwatched for passerines and sea passage; Mizen Head in Cork, with no mention of the new seawatching centre being established there; and Downpatrick Head and Doonvinalla on the north Mayo coast, which are far better than Erris Head for autumn seawatching.

Nonetheless this book is a must for any birder visiting Ireland. Buy it; go there; and see what you can find.

TONY MARR

Ireland's Wetland Wealth: the birdlife of the estuaries, lakes, coasts, rivers, bogs and turloughs of Ireland. By Ralph Sheppard. Irish Wildbird Conservancy, Monkstown, 1993. 152 pages; 47 maps; many black-and-white drawings and photographs. ISBN 0-950-4454-95. £12.99.

Ireland is an important place for migratory waterfowl in winter, and no flyway study or conservation programme would be complete without good data from the Emerald Isle, so rich in coastal and inland wetlands.

Many of us, including the 300 people who helped collect the data, have been waiting impatiently for *Ireland's Wetland Wealth*; but the wait is over and was worth it. This is a fine piece of work, an attractive book inside and out, and full of the information needed by ornithologists, conservation planners and waterbird managers. Using as a basis the Winter Wetlands Survey, undertaken from 1984/85 to 1986/87, Ralph Sheppard has compiled a comprehensive overview of the importance of Ireland for wintering waterbirds.

Taking an all-Ireland approach, the book presents the results of the survey both by sites and by species, including useful distribution maps. The standard 1% levels derived from both international and national population sizes are used to identify 56 wetlands of international importance (i.e. potential Ramsar sites) and 110 wetlands of national importance. The importance of Ireland for migratory populations coming from breeding areas in Iceland, Greenland and Canada – such as those of Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Greenland White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris*, pale-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla hrota* and Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* – is emphasised.

Following Clive Hutchinson's benchmark publication in 1979 (*Ireland's Wetlands and Their Birds*), *Ireland's Wetland Wealth* is another landmark which will be used for many years. But the fact that the data in this book are already eight to ten years old emphasises the need for a regular and long-term monitoring programme for waterbirds in Ireland. Let us hope that the current efforts to establish such a scheme are successful. Meanwhile, buy this book!

MICHAEL MOSER

Where to Find Birds in Australia. By **John Bransbury.** (Waymark, Fullarton, 1992. 539 pages. ISBN 0-646-12677-6. Paperback £16.00) This is a reprint of the first comprehensive Australian 'Where to Watch Birds' which was first published in 1987, but was out of print for several years. So far as I can tell, it is an exact reprint: a missed opportunity, as there must surely have been some changes to sites in Australia during the intervening five years. Nevertheless, it remains indispensable for all visiting birdwatchers, covering a large number of sites in great detail and with clearly drawn maps. If used in conjunction with the privately published *A Birder's Guide to Australia* by the late Mike Entwistle, which includes some specific sites for the harder-to-find species, little other information will be required. DAVID FISHER

The Mill on the Shore. By **Ann Cleeves.** (Macmillan, London, 1994. 201 pages. ISBN 0-333-61346-5. £14.99) The conservationist commits suicide. Or does he? The black-bearded BTO Regional Representative attends the memorial service, along with the dead man's family and acquaintances. It is not until chapter three that George Palmer-Jones, ornithologist and private detective, is called in to investigate. Fans will need to know no more than this to buy Ann Cleeves's latest mystery novel. JTRS

Dean of the Birdwatchers: a biography of Ludlow Griscom. By **William E. Davis, Jr.** (Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, 1994. 234 pages. ISBN 1-56098-310-8. \$29.95) It was Ludlow Griscom (1890-1959) whose field expertise set in train in the USA the move away from the 'What's hit's history, What's missed's mystery' attitude. In his foreword to this book, Roger Tory Peterson credits Ludlow Griscom with having convinced the publishers Houghton Mifflin that it was worth gambling on a 2,000-run printing of his first field guide (which was, of course, sold out overnight). JTRS

Collins Gem Birds Photoguide. By **Jim Flegg.** (HarperCollins, Glasgow, 1994. 256 pages. ISBN 0-00-470544-0. Paperback £3.50) At 8.25 × 11.7 cm, this would fit into even a toddler's pocket. The photographs are well chosen, the text is short but relevant, and this might well be the Christmas stocking-filler which attracts a new generation into the

pastime of birdwatching. Perched raptors and single-plumage portraits are, as always, the criticisms that can be levelled at a photographic guide, but users are likely soon to graduate to a more comprehensive field guide. A good starter. JTRS

Where to Watch Birds in Southern Spain: Andalusia, Extremadura and Gibraltar. By **Ernest Garcia & Andrew Paterson.** (Christopher Helm Publishers, London, 1994. 314 pages. ISBN 0-7136-3859-1. Paperback £12.99) Having made extensive use of it on a birding trip this Easter, I can attest to the accuracy of the text, which provided good directions, with clear maps. Of particular help is the seasonal breakdown of species by site, complemented by a systematic bird-list including status, plus a list of accidentals with sightings. The guide is very user-friendly and is highly recommended for anyone visiting this region. BRUCE C. FORRESTER

Great Bird Paintings of the World. vol. 1—The Old Masters. By **Christine E. Jackson.** (Antique Collectors' Club, 1993. 143 pages. ISBN 1-85149-178-3. £25.00) Christine Jackson has already published a handful of excellent books on different aspects of bird art, but this series of volumes, the first devoted to artists up to 1699, is her *magnum opus*. The remaining four will cover the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries and great Oriental bird paintings. The emphasis is on paintings, not bird-book art. As befits its subject, this book is richly illustrated with over 70 fine colour plates and 13 in monochrome. The artists range from Leonardo and Dürer to Francis Barlow and Hondecoeter. The variety of species, attesting to the enthusiasm of collectors, is remarkable, and their significance as symbols is investigated. ROBERT GILLMOR

Birds of Indianapolis: a guide to the region. By **Charles E. Keller & Timothy C. Keller.** (Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1993. 147 pages. ISBN 0-253-33119-6, hardback £25.00; ISBN 0-253-28534-8, paperback £11.99) Not a where-to-find guide; around a page of general text for 125 of 'the most common birds seen in the area', with 96 of them illustrated by small colour photographs. I would take it with me on a visit to Indianapolis. JTRS

Reiseführer Natur Schottland: mit England und Wales. By Renate Kostrzewa & Achim Kostrzewa. (BLV Verlagsgesellschaft, Munich, 1994. 200 pages. ISBN 3-405-14509-0. Paperback DM44) A guide to places of natural history interest, designed for tourists and, therefore, wholly in German. Simple, very clear maps; well-reproduced, appropriate photographs. It would make me want to come here! JTRS

Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa. 6th edn. By Gordon Lindsay Maclean. (New Holland, London, 1993. 871 pages. ISBN 1-85368-276-4. £29.99) This book contains information not available in any other single volume. The sixth edition follows the format of the fifth (1985). Additions include 20 more species accounts, identification keys grouped at the beginning, more maps, and German species names. Improvements include 12 species texts overhauled, refined identification criteria for 68 species, more sonagrams, one half of the distribution maps updated and some new plates.

The book does not, however, match its claims. The data in the maps (1990) and the text (January 1992) are not always compatible and, in some cases, are wrong: the lack of access to the National Atlas Project (due 1995) shows. An attempt was made to improve some of the plates (e.g. warblers and flycatchers), but others are now 20 years old, and show it—up-and-coming artists take note.

If you must buy one, get it from South Africa for R70, as opposed to about R150 in the UK; otherwise, wait for the seventh edition, or keep to the fifth. J. W. ENTICOTT

Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe. By Paul Sterry. (Crowood Press, Ramsbury, 1994. 320 pages. ISBN 1-85223-793-7. Paperback £9.99) The 720 colour photographs are good value for £9.99, but Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* 'Very similar to Chiffchaff [*P. collybita*] and best distinguished by song' demonstrates the level of guidance which is offered. JTRS

Scottish Birds. By Valerie Thom. (HarperCollins Publishers, London, 1994. 256 pages. ISBN 0-00-219983-1. Paperback £7.99) A Collins guide, sponsored by Total, aimed at 'anyone who knows relatively little about Scottish birds and would like to know more.' It deliberately covers only the common species, and these are arranged under habitats rather than in the natural sequence. This is intended to help the beginner, but in my view is a great mistake (e.g. House Martin *Delichon urbica* is on

page 45, but Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* is on page 144); there is usually no indication of the size of each bird, and the beginner—at whom this book is supposed to be aimed—might deduce from illustrations on facing pages that Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* are much the same size as Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris*, and Tree Pipits *Anthus trivialis* the same size as Mistle Thrushes *Turdus viscivorus*. The illustrations (by Norman Arlott) are appropriate for such a guide and the texts cover more than mere identification, so are also very good for interested novices. JTRS

Lijst van Nederlandse Vogelsoorten 1994 (List of Dutch Bird Species 1994). By A. B. van den Berg. (A. B. van den Berg, Santpoort-Zuid, 1994. Paperback, Dutch guilder 17.50) A definitive list of the 434 species reliably recorded in the Netherlands (and in Belgium) from 1800 to 1st February 1994, with individual records listed for species recorded five times or less, and the number of records given (for the periods 1800-1991 and 1980-91 separately) for those recorded six to 50 times. As well as Dutch and scientific names of birds, English names are also provided, so, in combination with the explanatory introduction (which is included in English as well as Dutch), the list can be fully understood by a reader with no knowledge of the Dutch language. The gum binding was not very secure on the review copy (but this can quickly be solved by means of a staple or two). This list is an invaluable reference for anyone with any interest in the birds of the Netherlands. JTRS

Skua and Penguin: predator and prey. By Euan Young. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994. 452 pages. ISBN 0-521-32251-0. £65.00) Skuas have been described as 'gulls turned into hawks'. Up to a point. They are mostly gull, and are more vulture than hawk. In the Antarctic, skuas (the South Polar Skua *Stercorarius (Catharacta) maccomicki* and Brown Skua *S. (C.) lonnbergi*) commonly nest near penguin colonies. Euan Young's study of South Polar Skuas and Adélie Penguins *Pygoscelis adeliae* shows that, despite the huge biomass of penguins and contrary to what the casual observer might conclude, the skuas rely mainly on foraging at sea. They can successfully prey only on penguin eggs or young chicks, food resources which are available for a fraction of the skuas' breeding season. The study is most interesting for its description of the penguins' anti-predator behaviour. ROBERT BURTON



Notes

Little Ringed Plover eating tadpole On 14th May 1989, at a disused, partly infilled gravel-pit in Leicestershire which had been prone to extensive winter flooding, the area was swarming with tadpoles of the common frog *Rana temporaria*. A Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* which had been picking small items from the surface of dry, bare earth reached one of the pools, waded in a little way and seized a tadpole, flicking it out on to the mud; it then picked up the tadpole, mandibulated it for several seconds and dropped it, repeating this procedure twice more before swallowing the prey head first, with some obvious difficulty. The plover made no attempt to feed further on tadpoles, but returned to surface-picking on the drier areas. *BWP* (vol. 3) makes no mention of tadpoles in the diet of the Little Ringed Plover.

DAVE GAMBLE

2 Shanklin Gardens, Leicester Forest East, Leicester LE3 3JR

Blackbird eating tadpoles On a number of occasions since 1988, at Dwyran, Anglesey, Gwynedd, a female Blackbird *Turdus merula* has eaten frog tadpoles *Rana* from my garden pond, recalling the Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* described by Dr Radford (*Brit. Birds* 84: 152-153). In June 1991, what was presumably the same Blackbird was seen on several dates to eat tadpoles of the common toad *Bufo bufo*. The tadpoles were taken three to five at a time, briefly wiped on the paving by the pond, and then swallowed. I observed the same behaviour again in 1992 and 1993.

NORMAN GAMMON

Cristin, 7 Gorffwysfa, Dwyran, Ynys Môn, Gwynedd LL61 6YN

Dr A. P. Radford (*Brit. Birds* 84: 152-153) recorded a Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* eating tadpoles.
EDS

Long-tailed Tits swallowing iron-rust fragments At 11.30 GMT on 7th November 1990, at Steart, near Bridgwater, Somerset, I saw eight Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus* moving and feeding along a hedge bordering a pasture field. Two of them suddenly started to investigate the rusty barbs of an old length of barbed wire in the hedge; through binoculars, I saw them pick off and swallow some rust scales, this behaviour continuing for about 30 seconds. Inspection of the barbed wire after the tits had flown off showed no evidence of invertebrates. I have not found any reference in the literature to birds ingesting iron-rust fragments, but the behaviour reminded me of occasions when I have seen Long-tailed Tits investigating and apparently swallowing minute pieces of lichen.

A. P. RADFORD

Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

Could the tits have taken the rust as a substitute for grit, or perhaps been obtaining some mineral from the iron-rust? EDS

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Common Crossbills attacking oak catkins and galls On 25th April 1991, in the Linmere district of Delamere Forest, Cheshire, I found two pairs of Common Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* apparently mandibulating the unfolding young foliage of a pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*. As I watched from beneath the tree, I saw that the crossbills were in fact eating the emerging catkins, rather than the leaves (which sprout at the same time). After about ten minutes, a further ten crossbills arrived, some of which alighted in nearby Scots pines *Pinus sylvestris* and began to pluck and feed on the cones in the usual manner. Others, however, joined the original individuals in the oak tree, where they took an immediate interest in the old knopper galls caused by the gall wasp *Andricus quercuscalicis*; they first detached the galls and deftly removed the obstructive acorn cups (the acorns themselves having long since fallen), before extricating the grubs and discarding the gall. At least five crossbills fed on the galls in this manner.

P. I. MORRIS

Caughall Farmhouse Cottage, Caughall Road, Upton-by-Chester, Cheshire CH2 4BW



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Claimed occurrences of Red-billed Tropicbird in Britain

Alan Knox, on behalf of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

The recent occurrence of a tideline corpse of a Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* at Landguard Point, Suffolk, on 17th February 1993 (Anon. 1993; Knox *et al.* 1994) has renewed interest in the possibility of this species occurring naturally in Britain and Ireland. There are also two historical claims of Red-billed Tropicbird in Britain.

Dr W. R. P. Bourne discussed the old claims in a recent paper on seabirds, where he wrote that dead individuals had been found in Lancashire and at Malvern (Bourne 1992). Although he did not indicate whether he was referring to one or both of these records, he included Red-billed Tropicbird amongst 'those records which seem plausible' and suggested that this species 'ought perhaps to be' on the British List (Bourne 1992). The species would be inadmissible for category A of the list as the claimed occurrences are too old. If acceptable, they would be placed in category B, which is reserved for species of which there are no records since 1958 (when the British Birds Rarities Committee started). The BOURC had already started to review the two old records before the Landguard occurrence.

The Lancashire record

The Lancashire specimen was said to have been 'found dead on the sea coast' in about 1698 (Gurney 1894) and, as such, would appear to have been eligible only for category D3 (reserved for tideline corpses, and not part of the British & Irish List). This, however, is not quite what it says in the original

publication (Leigh 1700). The caption to the 'table' (= plate) states that it was 'driven in at the same time' as another bird. Although this other bird was 'driven upon the coasts by the violent Hale-Storm . . .', it is not clear whether the supposed tropicbird was on the coast as well or just in the vicinity. Newton (1888), Gurney (1894) and Newton & Gadow (1896) listed the record rather uncritically. The only description is of 'a Bird all White (except only a short Red Beak) about the bigness of a *Pigeon*' (Leigh 1700). Red-billed Tropicbirds are not all-white and do not have small bills. Red-tailed Tropicbirds *P. rubricauda* are nearer to being all-white, but do not have small bills either. If this was all there was to the record it would be bad enough, but the plate and caption show that the other bird which fell victim to the same hail-storm was a '*Brasilian Magpye*', with a clear illustration of a toucan (Ramphastidae) (fig. 1).

There would appear to be problems with both the identification and the associations of this record.

The Malvern record

The specimen

The Malvern specimen is now in Norwich Castle Museum (Norfolk Museums Service). It was borrowed for examination and was examined by members of the BOURC at the December 1992 meeting of the Committee (plate 124). It was taken later that month to The Natural History Museum at Tring, where it was compared with the available material.

The specimen is mounted on a plain wooden base bearing a gummed circular label printed 'Norwich Castle Museum' and a hand-written registration number:

15.935
109

The single label tied to one leg reads:

Norwich Castle Museum
J. H. Gurney collection [printed]

15.935(109)
Tropic Bird
Phaëthon aethereus aesonauta [sic]
Found dead at Malvern Worcestershire
Zoologist 1871 p. 2666, 1876 p. 4766
Newtons Encyclopedia & Saunders p 366

[reverse]
T.N. & NS
vol v. 1894
p 659-60

On the underside of the wooden base is written in ink (faint in parts):

Tropic Bird
Phaethon aethereus
Found dead at Malvern in Worcestershire.
Zoologist 1871. p 2666
„ 1876. p 4766
Newton's Encyclopedia

This was apparently all written at the one time in the one hand, and therefore

not before 1888, when vol. 23 of the 9th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* appeared (Newton 1888).

The base would appear not to have been used for anything else before this specimen was placed on it. There are four screw holes on the underside, not penetrating through the wood. The screws presumably anchored the base to another structure at some time. When the specimen was put on this base is not known. A photograph of the bird in Gurney (1894) shows the specimen in a case setting, standing on a gravelly substrate. It is not clear whether or not the bird is on the present base under the case dressing. The bird was presumably in this show case in the early/mid 1890s, and was removed at some later date. The leg wires do not look as if they were straightened and re-bent at any stage.

The specimen is old, dirty and dusty. The bill, legs and, rather surprisingly, the lores, have all been painted. The plumage looked as if it might be faded. Examination of the concealed parts of the feathers showed the same colour, indicating that significant bleaching caused by light had not occurred.

Taxonomy

There are three races of Red-billed Tropicbird (Vaurie 1965; Cramp & Simmons 1977):

mesonauta: Cape Verdes, islets off Senegal, West Indies, east Pacific.

aethereus: Ascension, St Helena, Fernando Noronha; the dark bars on the upperparts and the dark on the primaries and secondaries are paler and more grey than those of *mesonauta*; the primary coverts have wider white tips and margins.

indicus: Red Sea, Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea; smaller than the other two races, with the black streak through and behind eyes less well developed; the bill is more orange and has black cutting edges.

Distribution in the North Atlantic

Cramp & Simmons (1977) gave no Western Palearctic records of nominate *aethereus*. Unidentified tropicbirds have been recorded from Banc d'Arguin and Morocco (Géroudet 1965; Vieillard 1972). *P. a. mesonauta* (presumably) occurred in Madeira in August 1893 (Bannerman & Bannerman 1965), with two in September 1966 (Bannerman & Bannerman 1968). A fresh tideline corpse of an immature male was found in the Netherlands on 27th January 1985 (Bruinzeel 1986). The race was claimed to be *mesonauta*. As Bruinzeel noted, '... the origin of this beached bird remains obscure'. Since it had fresh flying-fish (Exocoetidae) in its stomach, this is an understatement.

Two Red-billed Tropicbirds followed a yacht for an hour between the islands of Gomera and La Palma, Canary Islands, on 24th May 1987 (seen and photographed by D. Riordan, per C. Murphy). The first record for Europe would appear to involve one seen at sea 162 km due west of Cabo Sardão, Portugal, in August 1988 (Moore 1990). It was suggested that this might have been nominate *aethereus*, but, as it was not seen closer than 200 m, racial identification is questionable. In March 1988, two were seen (one entering a hole) on Gomera (Korn 1989). This is given as the first record (and breeding) for the Canary Islands. Singles were seen off Tenerife on 24th March and 12th April 1991, from the Gomera-Tenerife ferry on 19th April 1991 and 5 km off Tenerife on 23rd May 1992 (*Birding World* 4: 81, 145; 6: 17). The AOU notes

TAB: \overline{Y} L. OF BIRDS.

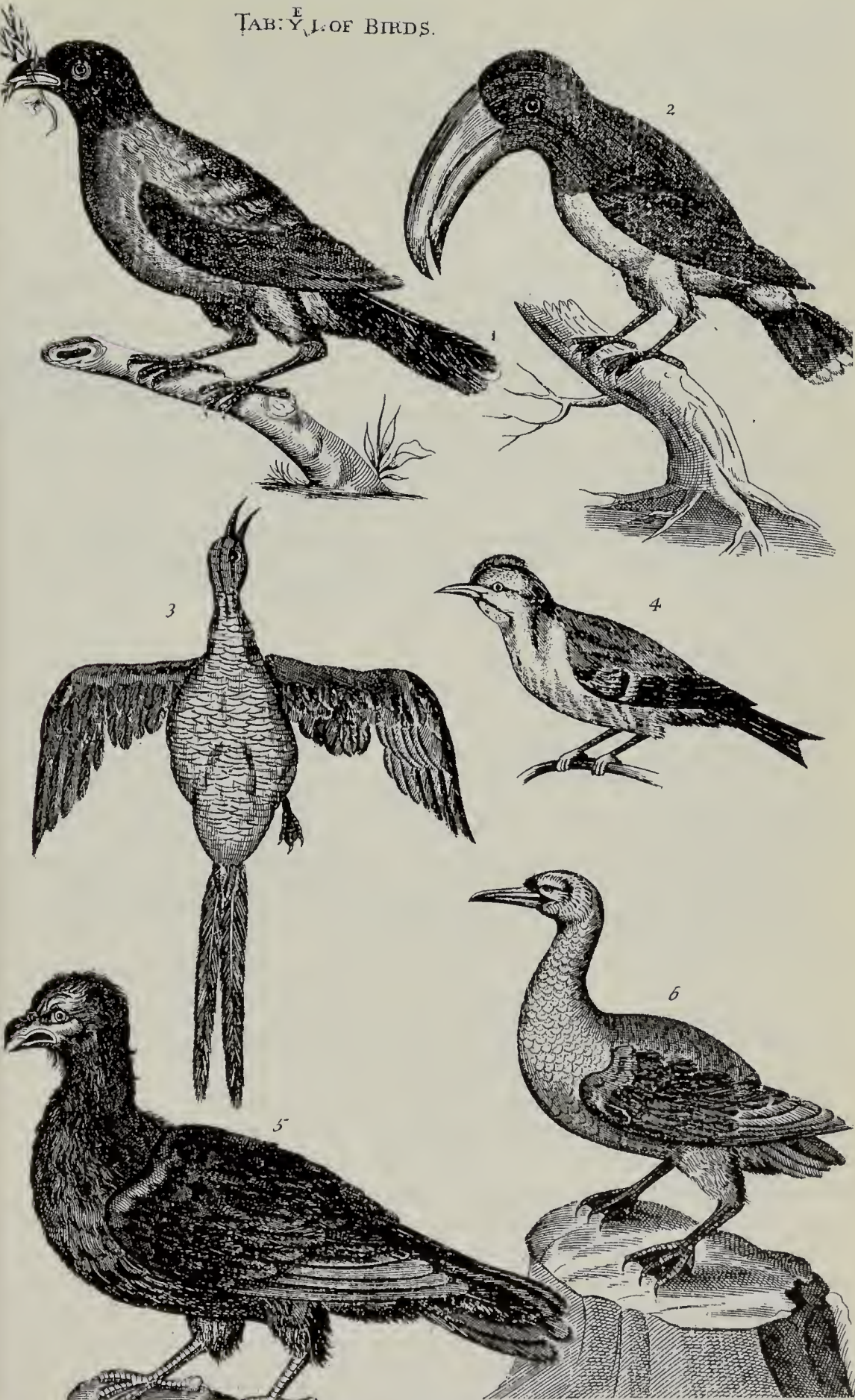


Fig. 1. Illustration of tropicbird *Phaethon* (middle left) from Leigh (1700), drawn after Willughby (1678). The toucan (*Ramphastidae*), 'driven upon the coasts' at the same time, appears top right

the species as being casual off the Atlantic coast of North America from Florida to New York (Long Island) and Rhode Island, but an old report from the Newfoundland Banks is regarded as unsubstantiated (AOU 1983). Lee *et al.* (1981) reviewed the records of this species off North America, noting without details that it has occurred north to Nova Scotia. They also reported that at least some of the North Carolina specimens have been assigned to the race *mesonauta*.

The race of the Malvern specimen

P. a. indicus is distinct, and the conspicuous black behind the eyes of the Malvern specimen immediately rules out this race. The other two races are less well marked. From about 12 skins of full-grown birds of each race at Tring, the Malvern bird's lack of crisp, dark primaries and secondaries puts it closer to the nominate race, although the dark colour is rather brown on the specimen. The specimen has several primary coverts with pale margins and tips which agree with the nominate race and are unlike those on any example of *mesonauta* examined.

On the basis of the material examined, the specimen agrees better with nominate *aethereus* than with *mesonauta*. On range alone, a genuine British specimen might have been expected to have been *mesonauta*.

Provenance of the specimen

The Malvern record has an utterly tortuous provenance which must be pieced together from various sources:

c. 1854 Picked up, dead, in the flesh (Lees 1871), on the farm of a Mr Yapp, of Cradley, near Malvern (Heaton 1876). See Gurney (1894, & below) for the origin of the c. 1854 date.

Stuffed by an animal-painter and bird-stuffer named Pitman for an unnamed gentleman (information from Gurney, from his father, from the curator at Malvern, published in 1876).

The unnamed gentleman brought the bird to Malvern Museum, intending to present it to the Museum. He met Mr Walcott there, and gave it to him instead. Walcott lent the specimen to the Museum for exhibition. 'After a time' Walcott took it home, where it remained 'until about thirteen or fourteen years ago', i.e. 1862-63 (Gurney 1876).

1862-63 Walcott's collection sold to a gentleman at Pennoch's Court, near Worcester (Gurney 1876).

1867 That gentleman's collection sold in lots by Mr Matthews, auctioneer (Gurney 1876). Tropicbird bought by W. H. Heaton, along with about 200 other birds (Heaton 1876).

Tropicbird acquired from Heaton by J. H. Gurney (Gurney 1894).

1894 Gurney tells us that it was picked up dead 'forty years ago', i.e. 1854 (Gurney 1894). Presumably 'forty' is a rounded number of years rather than precise information.

post-1894 (presumably) Specimen removed from case setting. Only extant labelling added.

The main information about this bird seems to have been published by Gurney, who got it from his father, who got it from the Curator at Malvern, who got it from an unnamed gentleman, who presumably got it from Pitman or Yapp or whomever found the bird, perhaps even through other intermediaries. This information did not come to light until the 1870s, nearly 20 years after the bird's death, and the date of finding not until a further 20 years had elapsed. The specimen carries no original label; the oldest information with the specimen itself is apparently that on the underside of the base, which was probably written sometime in or after 1894, 40 years after the event. Heaton

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claimed to have had the specimen authenticated (Heaton 1876), but we do not know how. It would also have been useful to know if there had ever been any original labels and, if so, at what stage they had been removed.

As with the Lancashire specimen, the Malvern record seems to have lacked credibility with earlier authors, and not because it was unlikely to have been of natural occurrence: there were the other claims from Lancashire, Heligoland and Norway at least (none now accepted), and it was an acceptable idea that birds could be driven long distances by storms.

The long chain through which the original information seems to have passed and the delay in publication do not favour this record. The specimen is undoubtedly a Red-billed Tropicbird, but is it the right specimen, considering the series of owners, transfers and sales? And *aethereus* is not the race we should expect, unless it is more prone to vagrancy than *mesonauta*.



124. Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*, claimed to be from Malvern, Hereford & Worcester, c. 1854, now at Norwich Castle Museum (A. G. Knox)

BOURC assessment of the historical British records

The BOURC had no hesitation in rejecting the identification of the Lancashire claim. Even if the identity had been accepted, the association with the toucan would have rendered its provenance questionable.

The identity of the Malvern bird was accepted, but the provenance was unanimously considered to be unproven. The species has not been admitted to any category of the British List, nor placed in category D (BOU 1993).

The Landguard tropicbird

A dead Red-billed Tropicbird in good condition was found on the tideline at Landguard Point, Suffolk, on 17th February 1993. The specimen is now in Ipswich Museum. The bird was found very close to the container docks at Felixstowe and there is little doubt that it arrived in Britain on a ship and was washed or dumped over the side. Details of this bird and the investigation into its origin have been published (Anon. 1993; Knox *et al.* 1994).

The likelihood of natural occurrence in Britain

As noted above, there is apparently only one acceptable record of Red-billed Tropicbird in Europe. Although the species is regularly found off the eastern seaboard of North America, occasionally as far north as Nova Scotia, most individuals of this species are found nearer to their breeding areas and the species is not known as a long-distance migrant. Tropicbirds do, however, often associate with ships at sea, soaring at some height above them and sometimes following them. Tuck (1978) noted that tropicbirds 'frequently follow astern in the wake of ships at night, and becoming dazzled by the ship's lights, hit some part of the structure and are later found on board.' As such, they are potential candidates for ship-assisted passage, either dead or alive. Just across the English Channel, Vincent (1993) recorded four occurrences on ships going to, or at, Le Havre harbour alone, including one in January 1993. With the speed of modern shipping, coming regularly through the English Channel from areas within the breeding or foraging range of this species, it would seem to be just a matter of time before a live tropicbird occurs in British waters. A natural occurrence without ship-assistance seems less likely, as the main food (which includes flying-fish) would normally be found south of British and Irish waters.

Acknowledgments

The old claims were assessed by the members of the BOURC, who contributed to the discussion of these records. The reassessment would not have been possible without access to the library and collections at The Natural History Museum, Tring, the help of Dr A. G. Irwin at Norwich Castle Museum in the loan of the Malvern specimen and John Marchant in assisting in its transport. Chris Murphy provided details of the 1987 record; Howard Mendel at Ipswich Museum supplied additional information about the Landguard specimen; and Ian Dawson kindly prepared a full translation of Vincent (1993). Ian Dawson, Tim Haskipp, Ann-Marie Knox, Tony Marr and Dr David Parkin commented on the manuscript.

Summary

Two claims of Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* from Britain (Lancashire, c. 1698; near Malvern, Hereford & Worcester, c. 1851) have been reviewed by the BOURC for possible admission to the British List. The identity of the Lancashire bird was not accepted and, anyway, it was found with a toucan (Ramphastidae) after a storm and the provenance is questionable. The identity of the Malvern bird (a specimen now in Norwich Castle Museum) is accepted. The bird bears no original labels. Details of its discovery emerged only over a period of 10 years, during which time the specimen had changed hands on several occasions. The provenance is considered to be unproven.

A recent specimen from Landguard Point, Suffolk, in February 1993 is discussed, as is the likelihood of this species occurring naturally in Britain.

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Red-billed Tropicbird in Suffolk

Alan Knox, Howard Mendel and Nigel Odin

On 17th February 1993, following a report of bird carcasses on the shoreline at Landguard Point, Suffolk, the area was surveyed by NO. A few emaciated Common Guillemots *Uria aalge* were found and, on part of the Harwich harbour shore inside the spit, the carcass of a Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* was discovered. It was on the third tideline up the beach and would have been washed ashore at least 36 hours previously. Although the eyes were sunken, the carcass was in good condition and had somehow escaped the attentions of tideline scavengers.

Examination of the specimen

The specimen was prepared as a study skin with one wing partly spread (Ipswich Museum R.1993-19; plate 125). X-ray and visual examination of the trunk after skinning revealed that the left coracoid had been dislocated from the sternum and the anterior end of the sternal keel had recently been fractured. It is unlikely that these injuries would have occurred during the preparation of the specimen. The skeleton of the trunk was preserved (Natural History Museum, Tring, S/1993.36.1).

Some of the plumage was contaminated with oil, particularly on the neck. A sample of the soiled feathers was sent to the Institute of Offshore Engineering at Heriot-Watt University for analysis. Although it was not possible to determine the precise origin of the oil from its biomarker fingerprint, the oil was considered to be probably a medium/heavy fuel oil and it was still fairly fresh, having been exposed to the elements for only one to five days, depending on the weather. The oil showed signs of physical weathering, but there was no evidence of microbial degradation. The analysis suggested that the oil was probably not from a slick and was more likely from a drop in the water or from the deck of a ship.

The bird was sexed internally as a female, with an ovary about 8 mm long. The ova were indiscernible, probably because the tissues were starting to decompose. The gizzard did not contain any fresh food, but several small fish vertebrae, fish scales, two otoliths (fish ear bones), a fish eye lens, a small

squid beak and various other remains were recovered. Of the items which could readily be identified, the otoliths and vertebrae had come from a flying-fish, most likely of the genus *Hirundichthys*, and from an individual probably about 12-19 cm long. The otoliths were more highly eroded than is usual for food remains in bird gizzards, suggesting that they had been in the tropic-bird's gizzard for a long time.

Description

Generally white, with heavy black bars on feathers on upperparts. Head: white with solid black in front of eye, becoming more broken behind eye and broadening on nape. Dark areas on primaries and inner secondaries jet-black. Outer primary coverts all black, lacking white on outer edges or tips. Lower lesser coverts black with only narrow white tips, the black forming an extensive bar on inner wing; upper lesser coverts with whiter bases, centres and edges, though still heavily marked. The heavy markings on the upperparts and head

suggest that the bird was immature. Contour feathers apparently very fresh. Most wing feathers fresh, although a few inner secondaries, inner greater coverts and other inner coverts very worn and much browner. Tertiaries fresh. Bill orange-red with clear black on the cutting edges, the tip and around the nostrils.

MEASUREMENTS Left wing 290 mm, right wing 293 mm, tail 195 mm, exposed culmen 60.5 mm, bill depth 20 mm, weight at time of preparation 540 g.

Racial identification

The plumage differences between the subspecies of Red-billed Tropicbird and their geographic ranges have been summarised by Knox (1994). The two Atlantic races (one of which also occurs in the eastern Pacific), *aethereus* and *mesonauta*, are significantly larger than *indicus* from the Red Sea, Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea: wing 296-330 mm, bill 59-66 mm (both sexes) on *aethereus* and *mesonauta*, compared with wing 267-315 mm, bill 52-62 mm on *indicus* (Cramp & Simmons 1977; Brown *et al.* 1982).

The small size (particularly wing length) of the Suffolk bird, the distinctive wing markings (especially the heavy black bar on the lesser coverts) and the characteristic bill colouring all indicate that the Landguard specimen belongs to the race *indicus*, rather than either of the two Atlantic subspecies. The bill length of the Suffolk bird is, however, not diagnostic. Bill depth was measured on skins at The Natural History Museum, Tring. For *aethereus* and *mesonauta*



125. Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*. Suffolk, February 1993. Specimen now at Ipswich Museum (A. G. Knox)

the bill depth was 21-23 mm (both sexes, $n = 17$), compared with 18-22 mm ($n = 16$) for *indicus*. The Suffolk bird's bill depth, at 20 mm, therefore fits better as *indicus* than as *aethereus* or *mesonauta*.

Identification of the bird as belonging to the race *indicus* is contrary to an earlier determination (Anon. 1993), even though the plumage and bill colour are clearly visible in the photograph accompanying that article.

Discussion

There are no accepted records of Red-billed Tropicbird for Britain, or, indeed, for northwest Europe. Two old records from England were recently reassessed by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, but neither was found to be acceptable (BOU 1993; Knox 1994). The occurrence of the species in the Western Palearctic has been summarised by Knox (1994). This includes a tideline corpse found in the Netherlands on 27th January 1985 (Bruinzeel 1986). It had fresh flying-fish in its stomach and the origins of the bird are considered to be obscure. It has not been accepted onto the Dutch list.

Tropicbirds often feed at night, frequently making use of the lights from ships to catch squid and flying-fish. At such times, they are liable to crash-land on deck after colliding with the ship (Tuck 1978; R. Burridge verbally). Such birds that come aboard at night are often uninjured, but they invariably try to hide in some quiet corner and have great difficulty taking off without assistance. Once under a container on deck, a bird would be well protected from the elements until the corpse was found during unloading or when the decks were being washed down. The carcass would then be dumped overboard either in harbour or shortly after leaving port (R. Burridge verbally).

Landguard Point at the southeast corner of Suffolk is a shingle spit protecting the mouth of the Orwell Estuary. The point is adjacent to the container port of Felixstowe, and shipping heading to the nearby ports of Ipswich and Harwich (Parkeston Quay) also passes close by. It is most likely that the tropicbird crash-landed on a ship probably bound for Felixstowe and died on board. The injuries noted above may have occurred when the bird collided with the ship or crashed to the deck. The carcass presumably went over the side near the port and was brought ashore on the inside of the spit on the next tide. Where the bird came aboard the ship is not known, but its racial identification and the flying-fish remains in the gut strongly suggest that this was not in British waters. The oil on the plumage may have been picked up on the deck of the vessel.

The nearest part of the normal range of *indicus* is the Red Sea. If the bird had come aboard a ship there, it might have remained alive for a few days and then the cool February weather may have slowed the decay of the corpse. A container ship would take six or seven days to travel from the eastern Mediterranean to Felixstowe.

Red-billed Tropicbirds have apparently occurred several times at Le Havre, France, or on ships headed there (Vincent 1993), although none of the records has been accepted. Perhaps it is only a coincidence that one of the records was in January 1993, but it is interesting to note that the Dutch tideline corpse was also in January.

Sub-category D3 of the British & Irish List (see BOU 1992) is reserved for species that have only been found dead on the tideline. Category D is not part of the main list. D3 is intended for species that may or may not have arrived alive, and naturally, in British or Irish waters. It seems most unlikely that the Landguard tropicbird arrived within territorial limits either alive or naturally. The record has not been submitted for possible inclusion in category D.

Acknowledgments

We should like to thank Bob Burridge, a Merchant seafarer and ornithologist, for his observations on tropicbirds from and on ships. S. J. W. Grigson at the Institute of Offshore Engineering carried out the analysis of the oil, kindly arranged by D. J. Lampard. The food remains were identified by Oliver Crimmen at The Natural History Museum, Dr Werner Schwarzhaus and Alison Locker. We are also grateful to The Natural History Museum, for access to skins and the library at Tring. Tim Inskipp, Peter Lansdown and John Marchant made helpful comments on the manuscript.

Summary

A dead, probable immature female, Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* was found on the tideline on the Orwell River side of Landguard Point, Suffolk, on 17th February 1993. When discovered, the bird was in good condition and apparently uninjured. The skin and part of the skeleton have been preserved. The tropicbird belonged to the race *indicus*, normally found in the Red Sea, Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea. Bones from a flying-fish (Exocoetidae) were recovered from its gut. The bird's plumage was lightly oiled, apparently with fuel oil. It is suspected that the bird may have landed on a container ship in the Red Sea and subsequently died and that the body was later dumped overboard in or near Felixstowe. It would be inappropriate to include this record in sub-category D3 of the British & Irish List (reserved for tideline corpses of unknown origin), as it seems most unlikely that the bird arrived alive, or naturally, in British or Irish waters.

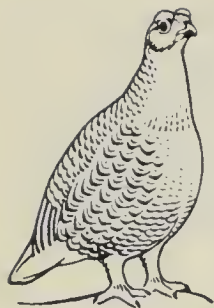
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Letter

Bannerman and the Black Oystercatcher It is difficult not to sympathise with the sentiment in Bernard Zonfrillo's mourning of the Great Auk *Pinguinus impennis*, exterminated by man's hand on 3rd June 1844 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 269-270), but his blaming of the late David Bannerman for the extinction of the Canary Islands Oystercatcher *Haematopus (moquini) meadewaldoi* in 1913 is misplaced. Bannerman was a restrained collector, whose concern for the future of the Canarian avifauna led him repeatedly to condemn overcollecting by other explorers in the archipelago. It is conceivable, if unlikely, that such protestations were a smoke-screen for his own poor success in making contact with the rarer species (he excessively demonised his rival, von Thanner: see *Bustard Studies* 1: 25-26), and his satisfaction at securing his specimen of the oystercatcher was evidently undimmed 50 years after the event, by which time there was no escaping the realisation that it was already a very rare species in 1913. Nevertheless, it was only a single skin (not the pair that Zonfrillo indicates), the century's first and last, and, as I pointed out in *Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands* (1985: 242), for a decade afterwards Bannerman kept his trophy and its provenance very quiet, apparently fearing a greater onslaught by others.

At any rate, the ultimate cause of extinction was not overcollecting: as few as six specimens of the species may exist. Hockey (*Biol. Conserv.* 39: 49-62) has convincingly proposed that long-term competition by man for shellfish was the critical factor. While I strongly oppose the collection of species on the verge of extinction, with hindsight we can see that in 1913 nothing practical could have been done for the oystercatcher, and that Bannerman can have had no other impact than to preserve an important specimen for posterity. The closest parallel to the demise of the Great Auk is the fact that the date on which Bannerman got his bird was, remarkably, 3rd June.

N. J. COLLAR

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Bernard Zonfrillo has replied as follows: 'N. J. Collar's defence of the late David Bannerman is perhaps understandable; Bannerman did, however, deliberately hunt down and kill the last Canary Islands Oystercatcher, thus rendering it extinct. Bannerman believed, as late as 1963, that the species was not extinct (*Birds of the Atlantic Islands* vol. 1, 1963). He was terribly wrong.

'While limpet-collecting may have had a significant impact on the bird's demise, oystercatchers are adaptable, and there are alternative foods upon which it could and evidently did survive. The species was perhaps always rare, and very shy of man, to the point where, latterly, little study was possible. While Bannerman may not have known that the bird he shot on Graciosa in 1913 was the last, it must have been apparent to him that they were in a perilous situation. The last bird might equally have been shot by von Thanner, but his searchings for the species were all in vain.

'Just as the three leelanders can be named, if not blamed, for the extinction of the Great Auk, David Bannerman, with whom I often conversed, must similarly take his place in the inglorious history of the extinction of the Canary Islands Oystercatcher.' Eds



Public Enquiry safeguards Budle Bay

LINDISFARNE NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE, situated on the North Northumberland coast and embracing part of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, was established in 1964. Managed by English Nature, it was designated a Special Protection Area in March 1992 under EC Directive 79/409 and included on the Ramsar Convention list of Wetlands of International Importance, chiefly for its populations of Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*, European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, pale-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla hrota*, Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* and Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*.

In addition to wildfowling, which is practised over certain parts of the Reserve, bait-digging is permitted on intertidal land adjacent to the Holy Island causeway. Bye-laws dating from 1987, banning bait-digging in the Budle Bay sanctuary area, were, however, being flouted; this not only caused excessive disturbance to wildfowl using the area, but the disturbance of sediments by intensive digging was also known to increase the release of toxic pollutants such as cadmium and mercury. This led to a Public Enquiry taking place in March of this year, at which anglers invoked King John's Magna Carta of 1215 to substantiate their claim to the ancient right to dig for bait.

In July, the Secretary of State for the Environment announced the results of the Public Enquiry by confirming a ban on bait-digging at Budle Bay. This decision means that a Nature Conservation Order under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is legally enforceable to prevent disturbance to wildfowl using the Bay, the only sanctuary area on the whole of the British northeast coastline, by bait-digging.

This is the first time a Nature Conservation Order has been made covering the activities of third parties who do not own or occupy the land covered. The Order applies only to the Bay, which covers less than 10% of the total Reserve area and approximately 5% of the total intertidal land on the Northumberland coast.

Following the announcement, Martyn Howat, English Nature's Northumbria Area Manager, said they were pleased that the decision confirmed the importance of Budle Bay as a wildfowl refuge of national and international importance, and now looked forward to working with sea anglers to protect the wildlife of the Reserve in harmony with the needs of anglers and others. Since the Public Enquiry, the Northern Federation of Sea Anglers has accepted a long-standing invitation from English Nature to have a representative on the Joint Advisory Committee for Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve, which advises English Nature on the management of the area.

Ruddy Ducks

The latest views from the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust have been set out in detail by Baz Hughes (*BTO News* 193: 10). He summarises the outlook as follows: 'Without Europe-wide control measures for Ruddy Ducks [*Oxyura jamaicensis*], the future of the White-headed Duck [*O. leucocephala*] looks bleak. We must all hope that the immense effort that has been put into the conservation of this [latter] species has not been in vain . . . The Ruddy Duck is the first species that has been introduced into this country that threatens the survival of a native European species. We must ensure that it is the last.'

Red squirrel revival

A reserve has been established in Thetford Forest Park for red squirrels *Sciurus vulgaris*. As they enter the enclosure through a specially designed fence, the squirrels are tagged and radio-collared for subsequent monitoring.

The population within the reserve has increased, and one of the main factors appears to have been the removal of grey squirrels *S. carolinensis*.

This research, which is funded by the Forestry Commission and by English Nature under its Species Recovery Programme, will be continuing.

Humber Estuary Action Programme

Following last year's very successful Humber Estuary Standing Conference, the Environmental Sub-Committee of Humberside County Council has now published a Humber Estuary Action Programme, to report on the action taken by various organisations to conserve and develop this major estuary into the next century.

With 85 bodies involved in the programme, the 54-page document sets out details of the Action Programme with 200 initiatives under six major headings, and includes the Estuary Standing Conference Directory, containing many useful contact addresses and their responsibilities.

Those with a particular interest in this area can obtain copies from the Environmental Team, Humberside County Council, Cross Street, Beverley, North Humberside HU17 9BA.

Rooks—more or less

The Rook Survey, organised jointly by the Young Ornithologists' Club and Wildlife WATCH, found that numbers of our Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* have now stabilised following a population crash.

A total of 1,600 children participated, who, between them, censused a total of 24,786 nests in 777 colonies. The largest rookery counted was in Northamptonshire, containing 450 nests, while three-quarters of the rookeries found were more than ten years old. Interestingly, the average figure of 31.9 nests per rookery is identical to that found in the 1975 survey, though then there were only an estimated 800,000 pairs in Britain compared with 850,000 pairs in 1994.

With all this young enthusiasm being harnessed to good use, it is sad that there are still some of their parents' generation calling for the annihilation of certain rookeries.

Survey of breeding waders in Pennine Dales

During the summer, the RSPB, as UK partner in BirdLife International, published the results of its 1993 Survey of Breeding Waders in Baldersdale and Lamedale, Co. Durham, as part of its ongoing Survey of Breeding Waders on Agricultural Land in Scotland and Northern England. Undertaken by K. B. Shepherd, most of the survey area formed part of the Pennine Dales Environmentally Sensitive Area.

All breeding waders were surveyed with the exception of Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*. In addition, a number of other species of high conservation interest were

included. As well as contributing to the national survey, the main aim of the work was to instigate a programme of breeding-wader population-monitoring within the ESA.

The report outlines the survey area, details the methodology, presents the results in both summary and table form and includes a discussion on such topics as possible expansion of the ESA, wader productivity, and guidelines for future monitoring. The help and co-operation of the farmers in the Pennine Dales was essential for this survey, and was much appreciated.

British Gas Grassroots Action Scheme

The 1994 winners of this, one of the UK's top environmental awards, were announced at the end of June. Designed to encourage conservation charities, community groups and secondary schools to combine in improving their local environment in both town and country, this year 56 winners received awards ranging from £10,000 to just £32.98p. Birds will be major beneficiaries, with Barn Owls *Tyto alba*, Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata*, raptors and Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* being singled out for special mention.

If you would like to know more about how you could enter in a future year, contact Sue Lancashire or Jacky Bartlett in the Awards Administration office on 071-221-7883.

Welsh Hen Harriers

Since recolonisation of Wales by Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* in 1958, the small population has reached 20 to 30 pairs on moorland in the North. Annual monitoring of nests is now carried out by RSPB and the Countryside Council for Wales, with many chicks ringed and wing-tagged. Ringing recoveries and sightings of tagged individuals have shown that the harriers move south and east from Wales in the autumn, flying to southeast England and the Continent. A Spanish recovery of one fledged in Montgomeryshire provided the longest recorded movement until another Montgomeryshire Hen Harrier was controlled near Lisbon in Portugal last autumn. This bird must have flown a distance of at least 1,615 km. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

Bristol's Peregrine Falcons

These birds are now quite famous! Choosing to nest in the Avon Gorge NNR, following last year's failure, and the killing of two young by vandals in 1990, they have this year been successful in raising four young, thanks in no small part to over 1,000 hours' vigilance by volunteers, co-ordinated by the Bristol Ornithological Club, at the request of English Nature.

In addition to watching the young, the vol-

unteers also had the rewarding task of showing the birds to interested members of the public; several hundred people enjoyed the spectacle this year from a watchpoint on a cliff-top on Bristol Downs. As the only urban site of Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* in Britain to be continually watched, it is set to become one of Bristol's more unusual tourist attractions.

Watch out Loch Garten, your Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* have competition!

Moorland birds and the Big Guns

In 1993, the Council for National Parks published a full discussion paper on military training in the National Parks. Of particular concern, following troop withdrawal from Germany under the Government's 'Options for Change' programme, is the proposal by the MoD for a major intensification of its activities on the Otterburn Training Area within the Northumberland National Park.

At the time of writing (July), no formal proposal has been submitted, but it is thought that it will include the introduction of 45-tonne AS90 guns and Multiple Launch Rocket Systems.

This proposal is to be the subject of an Environmental Impact Assessment. To this end, the RSPB and Northumberland National Park have joined forces to fund a Moorland Bird Survey on the Otterburn Training Area. Although much work has been done following BTO standard bird-atlas format, more detailed information is now required.

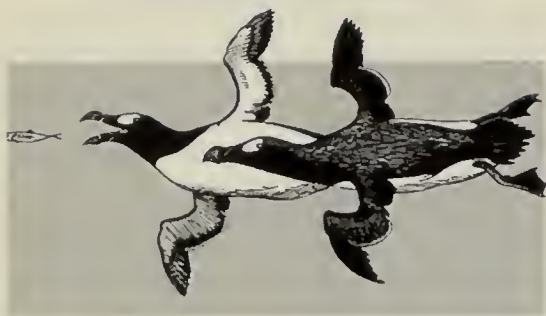
Comprehensive bird records in the Northumberland National Park area are

notably lacking, yet the Park seems to have great significance for a wide range of upland breeding birds, both on moorland areas and in the adjacent river valleys. The RSPB and the NNP hope, therefore, that the information will prove invaluable when the MoD eventually presents an Environmental Impact Assessment to accompany the proposal. In addition, it will be a valuable contribution to the nature conservation database currently being assembled by the National Park and will act as a baseline by which future changes can be scientifically assessed.

Once details of the MoD's proposal and assessment are made public, probably in the autumn, and the results of the bird survey analysed, the RSPB's position regarding the military developments at Otterburn will be made clear.

We shall undoubtedly be hearing more regarding the wide-ranging implications of this proposal, which will almost certainly become the subject of a future public enquiry. Watch this space!

More on Great Auks



Bernard Zonfrillo's 'In Memoriam' recognised the sad anniversary of the final days of the presence of Great Auks *Pinguinus impennis* on Earth (*Brit. Birds* 87: 269-270). Anyone with an appetite for more on the background to this tragedy should refer to a 24-page article by Peter Lyngs in the latest issue of *Dansk Ornitologisk Forenings Tidsskrift* (88: 49-72), which is, of course, mostly in Danish, but with about three pages of historical quotes in English.

For details of *DOFI*, write to DOF, Vesterbrogade 140, 1620 København V, Denmark.

Forests in better shape

Our forests had a good year in 1993, helped in part by the wet summer which enabled trees to carry more foliage. The last time the general condition of Britain's trees showed a slight improvement was back in 1987. Since then, five key species—Sitka spruce *Picea sitchensis*, Norway spruce *P. abies*, Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*, oak *Quercus* and beech *Fagus sylvatica*—have been annually reassessed.

Droughts, storm damage and insect attacks all affect the health of trees, which are vulnerable to a variety of biotic and climatic situations. Fluctuations in crown density over both short and long periods are therefore entirely to be expected.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the tree-health figures published by the Forestry Commission in a free Research Information Note, no. 251, should contact the Publications Section of the Commission at Alice Holt Lodge, Wrecclesham, Farnham, Surrey.

Game Conservancy Review

The Game Conservancy Review of 1993 contains details of over 40 projects, including the final report on a 16-year study of Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*: radio-tagging revealed successive polygyny (dominant males mating with a succession of different females) and spot-lamp censuses at night produced an estimate of approximately 800,000 Woodcocks overwintering in Britain (compared with a breeding population of only about 64,000 individuals).

Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of the *Review* should contact Julian Murray-Evans, The Game Conservancy Trust, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 1ET; tel. Fordingbridge (0425) 652381.

Who'd be a tour leader?

That's the title of an article in the latest issue of the very readable *Dorset Bird Club Newsletter* (no. 23, summer 1994). Mick Shepherd's tales of his eventful experiences—from Camargue to Varangerbotn—will ring a bell with everyone who has ever led or been on an organised bird tour.

The *Newsletter* is filled with pleasing bird drawings by a variety of artists, and articles on birding trips by members, and county bird news. All excellent value for DBC members: write to Eileen Bowman, Membership Secretary, 53 Lonnen Road, Colehill, Wimborne, Dorset BE21 7AT; phone Wimborne (0202) 884788.

Good news and bad news from Finland

The latest 'Network News' from BirdLife International (May 1994) gives some contrasting news from Finland. First the good: improvements to the country's hunting laws now give full protection to locally scarce or declining species. These include Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*, Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*, Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Stock Dove *Columba oenas*, Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, Jack Snipe *Limnocyrtus minimus* and Great Snipe *Gallinago media*. Until recently, the Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* was the only Finnish raptor without full legal protection, but this situation has now changed and the species receives full immunity from hunting.

On the down side, however, is that on the Åland Isles, between Finland and Sweden, spring hunting is allowed for Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*, and males of Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*, Goosander *Mergus merganser* and Red-breasted Merganser *M. senator*.

In recent years there has been considerable outrage in the north of Finland, directed at the shooting of Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos*. The northern Finnish district of Pudasjärvi is now offering a \$1,000 reward for information, and has placed eagle nests under close surveillance.

Cardiff Bay and the Severn Estuary

The long-running saga over Cardiff Bay Development Corporation's (CBDC) plans to barrage and destroy the Taff/Ely Estuary SSSI continues.

Barrage plans were further delayed by the intervention of the EU Greck Environment Commissioner, who in January wrote to John Gummer and the DoE advising that the UK government was in breach of European law (the Wild Birds Directive) by excising the Taff/Ely estuary from the proposed Severn Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and that the suggested mitigation works on the Gwent Levels were unsatisfactory. As the new Habitats Directive weakens the Birds Directive, however, the Commissioner implied that the work could proceed, but only if the UK designated any important estuaries for birds as SPAs and prepared a management strategy for the Severn and for Dunlin *Calidris alpina* and

Redshank *Tringa totanus*. A deal now appears to have been struck between the DoE and the Commissioner, and the Welsh Office has given the go-ahead to CBDC to award contracts for the barrage construction. One slight spin-off is that consultations over the Severn Estuary SPA have been completed very rapidly. Progress has also been made by local authorities around the Severn, by Les Esturiales, a group looking at management problems in five European estuaries (including the Severn), and by other interested organisations in applying for European (Life) funding to develop a strategy for the whole of the Severn Estuary.

Friends of the Earth organised a protest against the barrage on 11th June, when up to 2,000 demonstrated against the loss of the estuary. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

New British bird in Newbury?

Mike Everett drew our attention to *The Newbury Weekly News* of 26th May and a splendid little news item about the YOC and RSPB, and how youngsters were being encouraged to survey river banks and protect the wildlife of our rivers. To accompany the item, there was an excellent line-drawing of a pair of Spoonbill Sandpipers *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*.

Watching seabirds in comfort

A new close-circuit television camera was installed early this spring at South Stack, an RSPB reserve on Anglesey.

The Holyhead Cliff Rescue Team and a Blue Peter presenter climbed down the cliffs to install the camera, which is relaying stunning pictures of the breeding auks to visitors at Ellin's Tower. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

Good news and bad news for conservation in Wales

In South Wales, John Redwood, Secretary of State for Wales, refused to 'call in' an application by British Coal to open-cast and destroy a large area in the upper Neath valley. This included Selar Farm SSSI, noted for its traditional farmland with flower-rich pastures, birds and butterflies, including the scarce marsh fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia*. West Glamorgan County Council approved the application despite the area's SSSI status and massive numbers of objections from local residents and from a range of conservation groups including the Countryside Council for Wales. Up in the North, plans to infill part of the Dee estuary's mudflats for a dock development were, after numerous requests, eventually called in by the Secretary of State for Wales and a public enquiry is pending. Meanwhile Clwyd County Council has disclosed its revised plans for a coastal bypass around the town of Flint by the Dee estuary. A similar proposal for a bypass out in the Dee

estuary was fought and won by conservation bodies in 1990. The new route still cuts across saltmarsh by Flint Castle and just clips the edge of the RSPB's Oakenholt Marsh reserve.

The Dee has been subject to so many damaging developments over recent years, from tipping of coal waste into the estuary to reclamation of mudflats, that conservation groups under the umbrella of the Dee Estuary Conservation Group (DECG) have been urging the Ramsar Bureau to become involved. Last year, the DoE agreed that a monitoring procedure should be initiated by the Ramsar Bureau and, at last, officials from DoE and staff from the Ramsar Bureau plan to visit the Dee in the autumn to see for themselves the many problem areas and to discuss the way forward with DECG, the Countryside Council for Wales and other relevant bodies such as the National Rivers Authority and MAFF. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

Welsh Wildlife Trusts' Conference

About 150 members and supporters gathered in Aberystwyth one Saturday in April to hear a range of talks on water—its abstraction, pollution and other issues affecting the wildlife of streams, rivers and wetlands. Among the subjects discussed were the impacts on birds, other animals and plants of acidification and remedial liming, the media events organised along the River Severn by the Welsh Trusts as their contribution to the RSNC Water for Wildlife Campaign and the value of the NRA's Catchment Management Plans.

At present, both national and regional water-resources policies are being produced and

debated, with two potential major Welsh capital schemes being proposed to solve water-shortage problems (or excessive and wasteful use of water) in southeast England. These involve either taking additional water from Lake Vyrnwy and transferring this south or constructing a huge enlarged Craig Goch Reservoir in the Elan Valley in Mid Wales, a stronghold for Red Kites and other important bird species.

It is to be hoped that planned reductions in our use of water will obviate the need for either of these developments. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters in Europe

Of the 47 European records of Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*, the date/month of occurrence is not known for eight, but the other 39 fall into two main groups: 21 in southern Europe in April-May and 13 from late May to early August in northwestern and northern Europe; five in September divided between north and south. This pattern is demonstrated by Enno B. Elbels and Jan van der Laan in a paper in the latest *Dutch Birding* (16: 95-101), but it is not yet clear whether these European vagrants are of the Asian race *persicus* (which winters in East Africa) or the West African *chrysocercus*, or both.

A subscription to the bi-monthly *Dutch Birding* costs NLG60.00 (Europe outside Netherlands); write to Dutch Birding Association, c/o Anja Nusse, Symfoniestraat 21, 1312 ET Almere, Netherlands.

Zeiss monoculars

Carl Zeiss, sponsor of the British Birds Rareities Committee, has announced the launching of a new range of monoculars (4 × 12, 6 × 18, 8 × 20 and 10 × 25), each 'no bigger than a penknife'. For further details, write to Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd, Binocular Division, PO Box 78, Woodfield Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 1LU.

Sponsors of YOY

We are delighted to announce a tenth sponsor for this year's 'Young Ornithologists of the Year' competition: Oxford University Press has joined Barbour, Christopher Helm Publishers, Hamlyn, HarperCollins, Koww, Macmillan, Pica Press, T. & A. D. Poyser and Swarovski.

The competition's closing date this year was 20th September. The winners will be announced in the December issue and the presentation will be on 3rd December at the BTO Annual Conference.

Rare European birds in the UK

What species of birds that occur in Europe are globally threatened? And which of these are to be found in Britain? Here is the makings of a new bird-conservation game! BirdLife International has been reviewing the European species with the aid of IUCN threat categories. Forthcoming publications in 'The New BirdLife Conservation Series' will contain all the details. For now, there are 24 breeding or wintering species occurring in Europe and considered to be globally threatened. Only three of these are of relevance to the UK: Corn Crane *Crex crex*, Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* and Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*. The conservation movement is devoting considerable time and money in Scotland and Ireland towards ensuring the

survival of the Corn Crane. One priority now, however, must be to discover just how important is southern Britain and Ireland to migrant Aquatic Warblers. With a declining world population of under 4,000 breeding pairs, all confined to Europe, the regular appearance of the species at Marazion Marsh, Cornwall, or Radipole Lake, Dorset, is of tremendous significance. Not the easiest of species to see, this is a key area for Britain's ringers to come up with the answer to the questions 'How many?' and 'Where?'.

Ask for further details of *Birds in Europe: their conservation status* from A. Berry, BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA.

Kites go from strength to strength

The fact that Red Kites *Milvus milvus* now exceed 100 breeding pairs in Wales is good news, having first cracked that magic number in 1993. The team responsible—for many years struggling against apparent failure—is to be congratulated. News now comes in of even more success from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and RSPB reintroduction programmes in Scotland and England. Who would have thought that, within five years, we could have reached the stage where 28 pairs reared 50 young in 1994. In England, 20 pairs reared 37 young, and in Scotland eight pairs reared 13 young.

We all know that this is not a competitive game, but what fun over the coming years to chart the varying successes—how long before England overtakes Wales, and will Scotland be a slow starter but a rapid finisher?

Birds on aerogrammes



A new set of Royal Mail International aerogrammes features a variety of British birds (including Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, of course) and has been produced in association with the RSPB. The bird designs are by Noel Cusa, Mike Hodgson, Norman Arlott, Robert Gillmor and Peter Hayman. Visit your local PO!

Shetland report

The 125-page *Shetland Bird Report 1993* is another in the tradition of high-quality Shetland Bird Club publications. Not only a long and excellent systematic list with drawings and well-reproduced rarity photographs, but also papers on a 1992 census of Arctic *Stercorarius parasiticus* and Great Skuas *S. skua*, the rise and fall of the Maalie (Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*), seven detailed rarity accounts, a list of cetaceans during 1993, and a major 22-page paper on the MV *Braer* wreck of January 1993.

To purchase copies, contact Ian Sandison, 9 Burnside, Lerwick, Shetland; phone Lerwick (0595) 5885.

Why not Fagbury?

On numerous occasions in the past, we have reported the designation of new Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the European Birds Directive. The latest addition to the list, however, has a definite snag and the Government appears to have missed an opportunity.

The new SPA covers the Stour and Orwell estuaries in Essex/Suffolk, but the area known as Fagbury mudflats appears to have been excluded purposely. We can only assume that this is to allow further developments at the Felixstowe docks, and the importance or otherwise for birds has been ignored.

Shrike photos

Tim Worfolk, placed third in this year's Bird Illustrator of the Year competition, would welcome photographs (not necessarily of the highest quality) as reference material for illustrations he is about to start for a guide to the world's shrikes (Laniidae) for Helm Information/Pica Press. Those especially required are of non-European species in the genus *Lanius* and the four African species in the genera *Corvinella* and *Eurocephalus*.

If you can help, please contact Tim Worfolk, 6 Johnsons Road, Bristol BS5 9ST; phone Bristol (0272) 552357.

'Arabian Wildlife'

It is always good to welcome a new, high-quality bird or wildlife magazine; even more welcome is one from a part of the world where conservation is an urgent issue.

The second number of *Arabian Wildlife* is to hand, with 40 well-designed and superbly illustrated papers. Articles concern the Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata*, the leopard *Panthera pardus*, the extinct onager *Equus hemionus*, the dugong *Dugong dugon*, the Al-Ansab Lagoons, desert flowers, turtles and sharks.

The feature 'Camera Talk' is by our friends Hanne & Jens Eriksen, and there is an Arabian Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition, with ten categories (note the closing date of 30th October 1994).

Editor-in-Chief is Professor Abdulaziz H. Abuzinada. *Arabian Wildlife* is published, in conjunction with the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development, PO Box 61681, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, by Planet Publishing Ltd, 20 Berkeley Street, London W1X 5AE.

The Breeding Birds of Bedfordshire, 1988-92

During 1988-92, fieldworkers were working on Bedfordshire's second tetrad atlas. The results allow a direct comparison between each species' distribution in 1968-77 and in 1988-92. Dramatic changes were expected for Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* and Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, but the increases for Grey *Motacilla flava* and Yellow Wagtails *M. cinerea* and Green *Picus viridis* and Great Spotted Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos major* were unexpected. There are 119 full species accounts, each with a pair of two-colour, computer-generated maps, a specially commissioned line-drawing and a population estimate.

The new Atlas will be available in a hard-back format from 1st November, but prior to that date copies may be ordered at the pre-publication price of £16 (including delivery); the expected retail price will be £20.

Order your copy now (cheques payable to B.N.H.S.) from R. Dazley, 71 Carterweys, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 1RB.

Garden birds in Beds

From Blackbird *Turdus merula* (in 99% of gardens), down to Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* and Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa* (each in only 1%), Bedfordshire birdwatchers recorded 62 species in a Garden Bird Feeding Survey in winter 1993/94.

The full results appear in a three-page article in *The Hobby*, the newsletter of the Bedfordshire Bird Club, and include such interesting statistics as Siskins *Carduelis spinus* appearing in 42% of gardens, Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* in 21% and Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* also in 21% (unimaginable a couple of decades ago). The data will form a baseline for future surveys, for the BBC has been so encouraged by the results that the counts are being continued in future winters.

For a copy of this issue of *The Hobby* or to join the BBC, write to Mary Sheridan, 28 Chestnut Hill, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 7TR.

Gathering of marine groups

Strong winds sadly put paid to a boat trip for 150 guests of the RSPB around the Pembrokeshire islands on 4th May. The Welsh launch of the Society's Marine Life Campaign still took place, but, instead, in a hotel overlooking the Cleddau estuary close to Milford Haven.

Representatives from local authorities, the Welsh Office, the MAFF, Sea Fisheries Committees, industrialists and conservation groups listened to contributors from Britain and Ireland and from as far away as Australia,

speaking on seabirds and sea-mammals and the various issues in, and problems faced by, the Irish Sea. None was more eloquent than Ian Bullock, warden on Ramsey Island, whose inspiring account of the magic of the oceans received long and warm applause.

The need for important marine areas to be identified and managed for their fish, bird or mammal interest and the need for sustainable use of the sea were the thrusts of the first part of the Marine Campaign. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

Ornithological societies in the Ukraine

The First Congress of the Ukrainian Ornithological Society (UOS) took place on 27th-28th November 1993 in Kiev. The main purposes of the UOS are the promotion of the study and protection of birds and bird habitats. The UOS remains as a subdivision of the Ukrainian Academy of Science, although a group of deputies attempted to convert it into a non-governmental organisation. Prof. M. A. Voynstvensky was elected as Honorary President of the UOS, with Dr N. L. Klestov and Dr I. A. Gorban as Vice-presidents. The address of the UOS is: c/o Zoological Institute of Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kiev 252061, Ukraine; phone (011) 225-01-12 (in Kiev).

A new society, 'the Protecting and Study Birds Society' (PSBS), was inaugurated on 28th November 1993 in Kiev. The PSBS is a non-governmental organisation, which aims to unite all those people who protect birds within the territory of the Ukraine. Every citizen of Ukraine who makes a contribution concerning nature and bird protection can become a member of the PSBS. Dr V. V. Serebrjakov was elected as President of the PSBS, with Dr I. T. Rusjev as Vice-president. The address of the PSBS is: c/o Biological Faculty, Kiev University, Vladimirska Str. 64, Kiev 252017, Ukraine; phone: (044) 266-95-68. Fax: (044) 559-94-02. (Information supplied by Dr A. I. Koryukov of Odessa State University)

First bird-club twin?

In what it thinks may be a world first (or at least a UK first), the Bedfordshire Bird Club has announced (*The Hobby* 14: 7-8) its forthcoming formal twinning with the New Haven Bird Club of Connecticut, USA.

As Stuart Winter, the BBC's Hon. Secretary, says: 'Town twinning is already a popular practice among local authorities throughout Britain, with the benefits of improving entente cordiale only too obvious. By twinning with the NHBC we hope to not only add to the "Special Relationship" that exists between the US and UK but also add a new dimension to our interest in birds.'

It's a Fur Cop

Under this headline, *The Times* (of London) reported the following on 19th May:

'Miami: A Mexican zoo official has been convicted here of trying to export a gorilla illegally. Victor Bernal offered £61,000 for a baby primate which turned out to be an undercover agent in a monkey suit.'

'Bird Watching' highlights

The October issue reveals the winners of *Bird Watching's* 1994 Optical Product Awards; Bill Oddie recalls his horrendous holiday in Shetland; there are guided tours of the Isle of Man and Trimley Marshes in Suffolk; news and gossip from the British Birdwatching Fair; October birding hints; a 24-page UK Bird Sightings supplement; and a free car sticker. *Bird Watching* is available on the 18th of each month.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—Northern Ireland

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Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Alan Richards—Midlands

John Ryan—Southwest

Don Taylor—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

John Wilson—Northwest

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'



Monthly marathon



The fifth photograph in this seventh Marathon was named as: Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* (84%), Mediterranean Shearwater *P. yelkouan* (9%), Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* (5%) and Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* (2%), with one vote for Mascarene Petrel *Pterodroma aterrima*, and the odd vote for Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*, Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* and Common Coot *Fulica atra* from entrants who did not spot the bill characteristics.

It was a Sooty Shearwater, photographed by David Fisher in California, USA, in August 1980. The seventh hurdle is represented by plate 126 on page 502, which is the one-hundredth photograph to be published in this long-running monthly competition, sponsored by SUNBIRD ever since it started in July 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 363-364). Thank you, SUNBIRD!



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 15th August to 18th September 1994

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Whitburn (Tyne & Wear), 17th September.

Soft-plumaged Petrel superspecies *Pterodroma mollis/madeira/feae* Two passed Mizen Head (Co. Cork), 24th August.

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes* Lissagriffin (Co. Cork), 11th September.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* Found dead, Fair Isle (Shetland), 1st September.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *C. pusilla* Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 28th August.

Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* Two, separately, at Ballycotton (Co. Cork), and singles at Inchydoney (Co. Cork) and Blackrock (Co. Kerry) in late August to early September; South Walney (Cumbria), 14th-15th September; Eyebrook Reservoir (Leicestershire), 17th-18th September.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* Near Sheringham (Norfolk), 17th September.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* Comber Estuary (Co. Down), 13th September.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Two juveniles, North Slob (Co. Wexford), 17th August, one staying to 21st.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* Weluey (Norfolk), 18th September.

126. Seventh 'Monthly marathon', seventh stage; photo no. 100. Identify the species. Read the rules on pages 25-26 of the January 1993 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th November 1994.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* First-summer, Reedy Flat, Lough Neagh (Co. Armagh), 25th August.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* Flamborough Head (Humberside), 14th September.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* Fair Isle, 15th September, three on 16th, and two on 17th-18th.

Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* Burnham Overy (Norfolk), 18th September.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* Newham Bridge (Cleveland), 18th September.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia malanocephala* Beachy Head (East Sussex), 2nd-7th September.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Three, Tresco (Scilly), 20th-28th August; two, Minsmere (Suffolk), 11th-12th September.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* Fair Isle, 23rd-24th August.

Lesser Grey Shrike *L. minor* Elie (Fife), 15th-18th September; Sheringham, 16th-17th September.

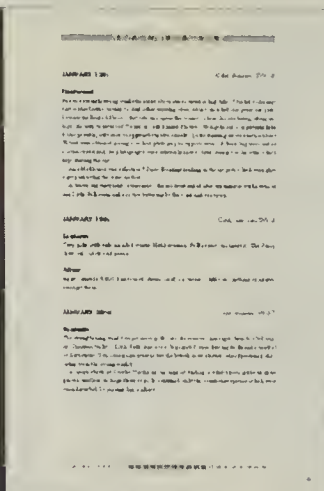
Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila* Out Skerries (Shetland), 2nd-5th September.



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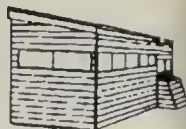


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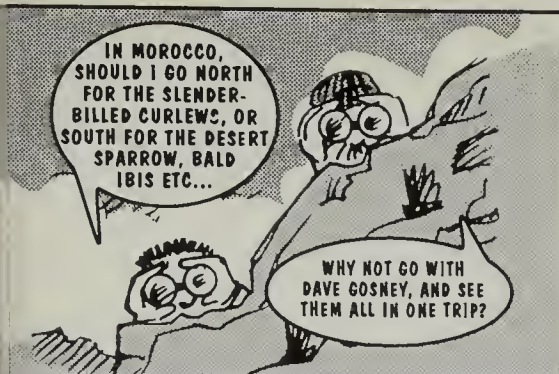
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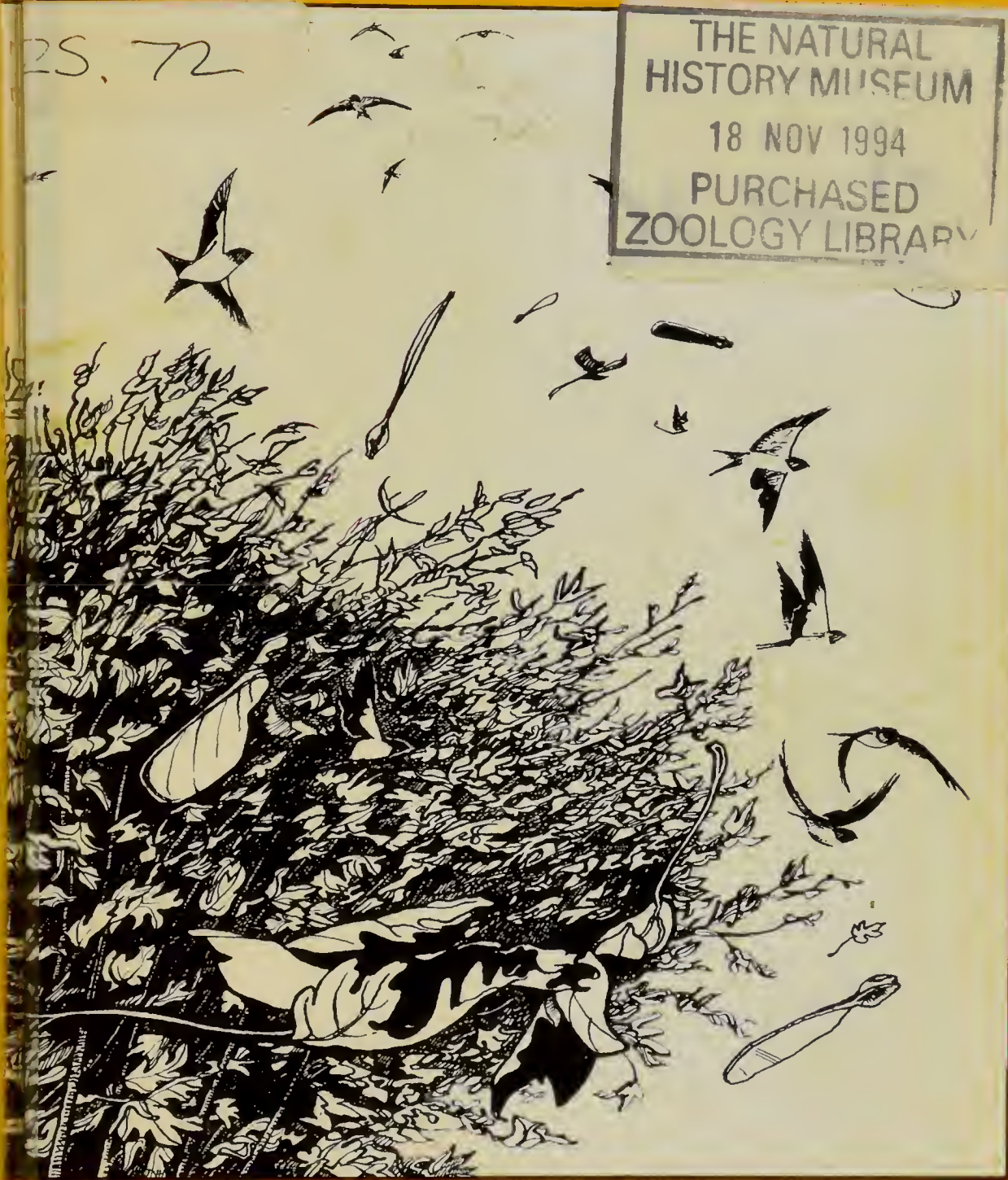
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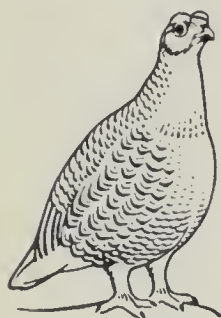
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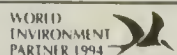
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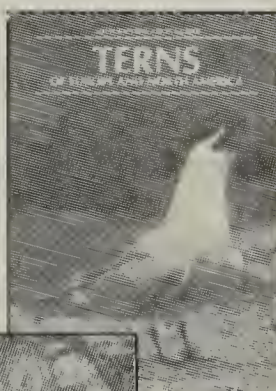
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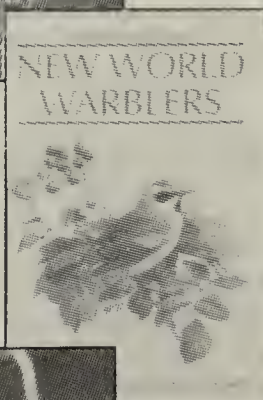
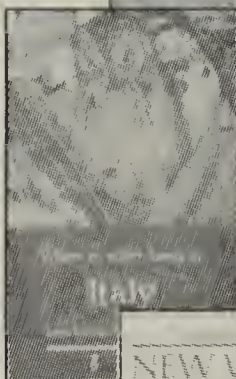


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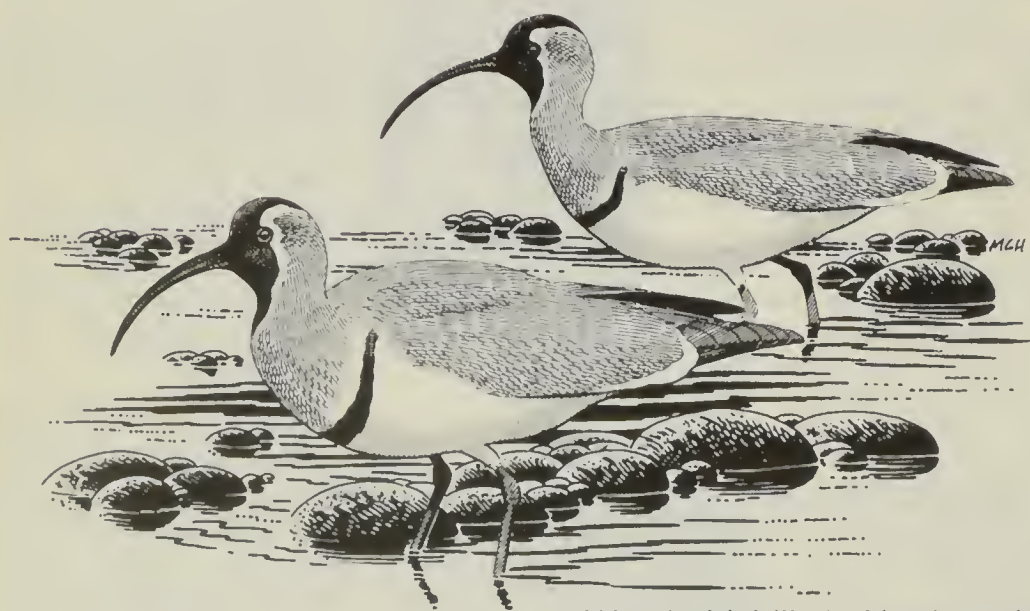
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Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1993

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Michael J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee

with comments by Graham P. Catley and Michael J. Rogers

This, the Rarities Committee's thirty-sixth annual report, details records of rare birds in 1993: a year with many highlights and much to interest the rare-bird enthusiast. The Committee has again been supported by the sponsorship of *Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd*: the twelfth year of the company's financial assistance, for which we are extremely grateful.

The membership of the Rarities Committee is listed each month on the inside front cover of *British Birds*, the journal which created the Committee and which has continued to support it, and to publish its reports, ever since. Some of the Committee's work and developments have already been outlined since the last report (*Brit. Birds* 86: 447-540), in 'Rarities Committee news and announcements' (*Brit. Birds* 87: 192) and an appeal for nominations for the next new member (*Brit. Birds* 87: 325), while a number of papers in *BB* have been based upon reports held in the Rarities Committee files (*Brit. Birds* 87: 16-21; 67-69; 223-231; 436-441) or initiated in some way by the Committee (*Brit. Birds* 86: 567-568; 600-604; 87: 136-142; 174-177; 418-430).

A number of BBRC-related features have appeared in the birdwatching press and we are only too pleased to open up the Committee's work to debate in this way: after all, the Committee exists to help, not hinder, the process of rare-bird recording and analysis in Britain. Attempts to open up another area of the Committee, however, have not been so successful: papers have been written, examining interesting records that have been rejected and explaining our reasons for such a decision, but, understandably perhaps, some of the observers concerned have not been happy to see them published. The idea has not been to criticise anyone, but merely to explain decisions with a high level of public interest and to try to improve our knowledge about the species concerned. Perhaps this will be achieved in due course.

Several accounts of species new to Britain & Ireland have also been published (*Brit. Birds* 86: 600-604; 87: 83-86; 284-288; 307-310; 362-365), some not only several years after the event, but also some years after acceptance. We have several more of these 'in press' or 'in prep.'. While we realise that, for many people, these appear to be 'ancient history', we believe that authoritative accounts in a journal with a worldwide distribution (including all the major libraries) are important and we wish to continue to clear the backlog of such reports. Most have been delayed simply because we have been unable to persuade the observers concerned to put pen to paper, but we feel that whenever possible the accounts should be written by the finder(s) rather than by someone who saw the bird later along with many other observers. A few particularly interesting 'firsts' of some years' standing remain to be written up: we encourage the people concerned to try to write a short account as soon as they are able.

The Committee has undergone a year of alleged criticism (yet none amounting to much more than hearsay), much praise (it is still a model followed by many committees in other countries) and considerable self-examination. We believe that we have operated, and continue to operate, an effective, efficient and reliable system of adjudication that serves British ornithology well; but we nevertheless remain open to any suggestions for improvement. A 'motorway' or 'fast-track' system, which was initiated largely to reduce members' workloads and to ensure the production of complete annual reports, proved highly effective and successful. We did, however, remove Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* and Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* from the list of species to be considered after the end of 1993. Removal of species from the list is one way to reduce the workload, undertaken without reward by Committee members, but it does reduce the service we offer to county recorders and to the readers of this report, who inevitably receive a less complete picture of the rarity scene. We wish to maintain a sensible balance: our own feelings that some species should be reinstated to the list were contradicted by the statistics and for 1994 none has returned to the list of species considered; yet many of us regret the continued absence of such tantalisingly scarce species as Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tyngites subruficollis*.

Various 'reviews' of past records have been undertaken or completed during the year. We are aware of the difficulties and possible embarrassment caused when a previously accepted record is subsequently rejected, and apologise to anyone who learns of the fate of such a record with which he or she was involved through a published account rather than a personal letter: it is not always easy to trace and notify those concerned. A Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* review has been instigated. Reviews have been completed for American *Pluvialis dominica* and Pacific Golden Plovers *P. fulva* (largely to establish whether records previously recorded as 'Lessers' could now be identified), Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*, Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (following the review of Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides* which attempted to eliminate northern Chiffchaffs *P. collybita* and was essentially looking for Greenish misidentified as Arctic) and Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*.

Some particularly difficult species remain to be dealt with after initial circulations called for further research, including Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (which we acknowledge is a matter of real frustration to the observers concerned), Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* and winter Pine Buntings *Emberiza leucocephalos*. Consideration of some potential additions to the British List remains to be fully completed, including South Polar Skua *Stercorarius macconnicki*, White-checked Tern *Sterna repressa*, Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* and Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*. Certain pelagic species, in addition to South Polar Skua, remain to be clarified and we apologise for the delay. We hope to have the situation resolved soon.

Some decisions by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee—well known and much debated (see, for example, *Brit. Birds* 87: 247-252)—have been to place species in Category D (which forms an appendix to the British List), and these are listed here in Appendix 1. We have initiated a new Appendix 3 which lists 'presumed escapes from captivity' which require monitoring. An isolated autumn record of an unlikely (but possible) Nearctic vagrant may, for example, be seen in a different light if several even more unlikely, inland, midsummer records are unearthed; without them, the pattern is incomplete and assessment less fully considered. We all, however, acknowledge that the job of sorting 'escapes' from wild vagrants has become fraught with difficulty, particularly in view of the realisation that the numbers of Palearctic birds held in captivity (and all too often lost from it) in continental Europe, rather than the UK, is enormous (see *Brit. Birds* 87: 355-359).

There are still 25 records for 1993 in circulation, mainly as a result of late submission; 21 await further information or comments from recorders, or views from expert referees; and a further 22 were received too late for circulation to be launched in time for this report. Excluding some of the 'difficult' species already mentioned, 47 records for 1992 and earlier years are still outstanding; eight of these are receiving attention, while the remaining 39 await proper details on which an assessment can be based.

We again urge all observers involved in finding and identifying rarities to send in their reports as soon as possible after the event, preferably via the county or regional recorder, or, in the case of a trapped and ringed rarity, via the BTO Ringing Unit. We cannot emphasise enough how important it is to have full details (although several pages of background information on 'ordinary' rarities may not be needed) and how vital it is that notes should be sent in, even of well-watched, multi-observed rarities of which photographs may have appeared in commercial magazines. It is sad to see records of individual rarities, including some that have been seen by hundreds of people, failing to be published in our report merely because everyone thought that somebody else would send in the details; this is an increasing international problem, but one which the Committee seeks to address. We also hope that ringers of trapped rarities can find time to add 'field notes', or good in-the-hand descriptions, to the scant details and biometrics that we occasionally receive, even though we thank the vast majority of ringers and other observers for supplying us with material that is a source of so much interest and enlightenment during the course of our deliberations.

RAH

Acknowledgments

The Committee wishes to record its most sincere gratitude to all observers and county and regional recorders, bird-observatory wardens and reserve wardens and their committees for their continued co-operation, upon which the day-to-day work of the Rarities Committee and this report's accuracy and completeness are entirely dependent. Special thanks are due also to the Irish Rare Birds Committee and its Secretary, Patrick Smiddy, for permission to include in this report all accepted records of rare birds in Ireland. The details, included in this report under the separate heading IRELAND, relate wholly to records which have been assessed by the IRBC. This much-appreciated and long-standing co-operation allows the presentation of a complete review of all rare-bird records and running totals of all rare species in the geographical unit of Britain & Ireland.

The Rarities Committee is indebted to many individual organisations for assistance during the past year. Once again (for the seventeenth time), Mike Rogers has compiled the main body of the report. The species comments have been written jointly by Graham Catley (non-passerines) and Mike Rogers (passerines), and the running totals for each species have been compiled by Peter Fraser and John Ryan. The Seabirds Advisory Panel, whose members are Peter Colston, Bill Curtis, Jim Enticott, Steve Madge and Tony Marr, continue to provide the Committee with specialist advice, as has Dick Forsman. The BTO, English Nature, Rare Bird News, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, the RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Zoological Museum at Tring have liaised over various matters.

In addition to those responsible for various sections of the report, two former members of the Committee—Peter Lansdown and John Marchant—provided enormous help with checks at typescript and proof stages.

The Committee—assisted by *Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd* through the Carl Zeiss Award—continues to encourage the submission of photographs and transparencies with rarity records, though not as substitutes for the written record. We are most grateful to the following for supplying prints or transparencies for circulation to the Committee and for possible publication with this Report: S. M. D. Alexander, M. Barnett, Ian Carter, G. P. Catley, Douglas Chinery, Robin Chittenden, B. Clasper, N. Clayton, S. Cochrane, Mark Collier, Dennis Coutts, Tony Croucher, W. A. J. Cunningham, Larry Dalziel, D. E. Dickson, Wendy Dickson, K. Draycott, Ian Fisher, Chris Gomersall, M. Gray, John Grearson, R. C. Hart, Ren Hathway, L. W. Hawkins, Andrew Hay, John Hewitt, K. Hewitt, Mike S. Hodgson, P. Hopkins, K. Jones, Reston Kilgour, Stuart Langsbury, P. A. Lassey, Jack Levene, N. V. McCaugh, Anthony McGeehan, M. J. McKee, Gavin Maclean, C. Massingham, Barry Mitchell, J. P. Moulton, Neil Murphy, A. Norris, P. Palmer, Jim Pattinson, A. R. Pay, E. Price, Bob Pyelitch, David C. Richardson, D. H. Sadler, Keith Scorell, K. Shepherd, M. N. Sidwell, B. E. Slade, G. P. Sutton, David Tipling, P. K. Veron, Howard Vaughan, Dr A. Wauder, R. D. Wemyss, S. White, R. C. Wilson, Christine & Norman Winterman, D. Young, S. Young, and Steve Young. The Committee is grateful also to those observers who included drawings of rarities in their record submissions; some of these are included in this report.

Highlights

This report includes the following major rarity records for Britain & Ireland:

1st-3rd Swinhoe's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma monorhis* (in 1989-93)

1st Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* (previous record referred to one 'At sea' on oil-platform in the North Sea)

1st Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* (in 1992; though earlier claims—some definitely misidentifications, but others almost certainly correctly identified, though not documented beyond all doubt—have previously come and gone from the List)

1st & 2nd Northern Mockingbirds *Mimus polyglottos* (in 1982 and 1988)

3rd Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*

3rd Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*

3rd Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi* (in 1990)

4th-8th Pallid Harriers *Circus macrourus* (reports still being assessed)

1th Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*

- 4th & 5th Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolensis*
 6th Orphee Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* (in 1991)
 6th & 7th Lesser Scaups *Aythya affinis*
 7th Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* of race *pallidirostris*
 7th Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (in 1992)

Irish records, which are adjudicated wholly by the Irish Rare Birds Committee, are also included in this Report, by permission of the IRBC, and include:

- 1st Irish Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (27 previous British records)
 1st Irish Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (8th for Britain & Ireland; an earlier Irish record is still being assessed)
 1st & 2nd Irish Sardinian Warblers *Sylvia melanocephala* (33 previous British records)

Other notable events during 1993 were the occurrence of nine Great White Egrets *Egretta alba*, 17 Black Kites *Milvus migrans*, five Great Snipes *Gallinago media*, seven Ross's Gulls *Rhodostethia rosea*, 31 Olive-backed Pipits *Anthus hodgsoni*, two Red-flanked Bluetails *Tarsiger cyanurus*, seven Blyth's Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, 12 Booted Warblers *Hippolais caligata*, 11 Dusky Warblers *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (but only four Radde's Warblers *P. schwarzi*), 44 Rustic Buntings *Emberiza rustica* and 41 Little Buntings *E. pusilla*.

It is also worth mentioning the very low numbers of Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* (four, after the record-breaking 120 in 1992) and the complete absence of Squacco Herons *Ardeola ralloides*, Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus*, Collared Pratincoles *Glareola pratincola*, Wilson's Phalaropes *Phalaropus tricolor* and Laughing Gulls *Larus atricilla*. JTRS

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as in the 1992 report (86: 447-540). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled.

(i) The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if photographed or tape-recorded (and this evidence seen or heard by the Committee); (5) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (6) date(s); and (7) observer(s), up to three in number, in alphabetical order.

(ii) In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the case of the very similar Long-billed *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus*, however, we are continuing to publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to those of pratincoles *Glareola*, albatrosses *Diomedea* and frigatebirds *Fregata*.

(iii) The sequence of species, English names and specific nomenclature follow *The 'British Birds' List of English Names of Western Palearctic Birds* (1993). Any sight records of subspecies (including those of birds trapped and released) are normally referred to as 'showing the characters' of the race concerned.

(iv) The three numbers in parentheses after each species' name refer respectively to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain & Ireland (excluding those 'At sea') (1) to the end of 1957, (2) for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (3) the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult and rather arbitrary, but the consensus of members is indicated by 'possibly the same' (counted as different in the totals), 'probably the same' (counted as the same in totals), or 'the same' when the evidence is certain or overwhelming. An identical approach is applied to records of the same

species recurring at the same locality after a lapse of time, including those which occur annually at the same or a nearby site. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee usually requires firm evidence before more than one is counted in the totals. A detailed breakdown of the figures for previous years is held by the Honorary Secretary.

(v) Irish records, assessed and accepted by the Irish Rare Birds Committee, are included separately, following the subheading IRELAND.

(vi) The world range is given in brackets at the beginning of each species comment.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 135, 8)

Devon Start Point, adult, 16th May (N. Lever, L. Lock).

Highland Stoer Head Light, Sutherland, adult, 6th November (D. G. Davenport).

Kent Dungeness, adult, 23rd April (M. Grace, D. Walker, N. E. Wall *et al.*).

Northumberland Druridge Bay, age uncertain, 11th October (F. Hopkin).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 2nd, 8th-9th May (D. A. Fairhurst, N. Ward *et al.*).

Shetland Burrae, North Roe, adult, 17th April, photo. (J. Swale, M. Tait, A. Williamson *et al.*). Fetlar, age uncertain, 23rd January (B. H. Thomason).

Yorkshire, North Filey Bay, age uncertain, 21st-27th March (S. Cochran, C. C. Thomas *et al.*).

At sea Solway Firth, off Maryport, adult, 1st May, photo. (J. K. Manson, P. Ullrich *et al.*).

1986 Yorkshire, North Filey, adult, dead, 18th February, photo. (T. Keuchel), mounted specimen retained by observer.

1987 Highland Sandside and Melvich Bays, first-year, 14th, 16th August (*Brit. Birds* 86: 540), now accepted (J. Corbett, S. A. M. Manson, E. W. E. Maughan *et al.*).

1991 Hampshire Near Lymington, adult, 14th February (J. J. Garr).

(Arctic Russia eastwards to Arctic Canada) Five in English waters sets a new annual record. The Yorkshire bird is the sixteenth accepted for that county, while the Shetland tally reaches 42. The two adults on spring passage up the English Channel are noteworthy. The late 1986 bird takes that year's total to a record 13.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 16, 0)

Cornwall Argal Reservoir, since 14th November 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 452) to 28th March; same, Stithians Reservoir, 2nd April to 1994 (per S. M. Christophers).

Northumberland Druridge Pool, since 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 452) to 19th January, 24th July to 26th September, photo. (A. J. Booth, A. D. Mould *et al.*); same, Warkworth Lane Pond, 30th April to 14th May (T. Blake, D. Robertson *et al.*), 12th to at least 21st December (per B. N. Rossiter).

(North and South America) The long-residence record is held by the first in Somerset at over 4½ years (from 22nd December 1963 to 5th July 1968), so these two still have some way to go, but at well-watched localities even their local movements are well monitored.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophrys* (2, 26, 0)

Shetland Hermaness, Unst, individual last recorded 30th June 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 452), 7th April to 13th July (per D. Suddaby).

At sea Sea area Wight, about 54 km southeast of Newhaven, East Sussex, 17th October (B. M. Utton).

1990 At sea Sea area Viking, 60° 00' N 02° 00' E, 30th January, photo. (A. Campbell).

(Southern oceans) If 'Albert' is the same individual as that at the Bass Rock (1967-69), then he or she will be at least thirty – middle-aged or elderly even for an albatross – so the chances of his or her annual return must be declining as a consequence. Records away from Shetland in the North Sea are taken as

probably referring to this individual, as could that in the English Channel, but there may be other individuals at sea. The statistics may well, however, overstate the albatross presence in British and Irish waters.

Albatross *Diomedea* (3, 45, 0)

1988 Dorset Hengistbury Head, 29th May (*Brit. Birds* 82: 508), now considered inadequately documented.

(Southern oceans)

Soft-plumaged Petrel superspecies *Pterodroma mollis/madeira/feae* (0, 3, 0)

1989 Cornwall Porthgwarra, 12th August (*Brit. Birds* 85: 510), second-named observer was D. J. W. Taylor.

(Pacific, central and southern Atlantic, and southern Indian Oceans)

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* (5, 84, 1)

1988 Dorset Hengistbury Head, 29th May (*Brit. Birds* 82: 508), now considered inadequately documented.

1992 Merseyside River Mersey, off Scaforth, 5th September (C. Kehoe).

IRELAND

Cork Cape Clear Island, 26th August.

1991 Clare Bridges of Ross, 30th September.

(Atlantic south from Madeira and Caribbean, southern Pacific and Indian Oceans) None in Britain, but one off Cape Clear Island on a typical date. This species continues to cause the BBRC severe headaches, since most descriptions just fail to provide that convincing element of proof. The Committee acknowledges, however, that this is a difficult species to prove on paper and one which, by its nature, seldom gives observers a second chance.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (4, 13, 0)

At sea Sea area Fair Isle, 61° 04' N 01° 49' W, about 50 km northwest of Ramna Stacks, Shetland, 8th August, photo. (P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Sea area Sole, 48° 56' N 07° 05' W, about 58 km SSW of Bishop Rock, Scilly, five, 1st August, all photo. (R. Howell, R. Pycfinch, Dr A. Wander, M. D. Wilson *et al.*) (plates 111 & 112); 49° 06' N 07° 15' W, two, 15th August (N. W. Hagley, J. McLoughlin, J. F. Ryan *et al.*); another, 49° 37' N 06° 58' W, 15th (N. P. Barlow *et al.*); 49° 54' N 07° 52' W, 20th August (M. Fiszler *et al.*); 49° 13' N 06° 39' W, 25th August (J. F. Ryan *et al.*).

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At sea 20 km south of Cape Clear Island, Co Cork, 25th August.

(Southern oceans) Another flush of records from pelagics into the Southwest Approaches, but just how many individuals are attracted to different trawlers and chum slicks is hard to say. The first record from Shetland waters is particularly noteworthy and sets a new latitudinal record for the British Isles. (Note that 'At sea' records are not included in the annual totals.) Dr Adrian Wander's photograph showing the yellow on the feet of one of the 1st August individuals (plate 111) won this year's Carl Zeiss Award (*Brit. Birds* 87: 434-435).

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* (0, 3, 0)

Tyne & Wear Tynemouth, ♀, trapped, 21st, 28th, 29th July, photo., same as 1992 below (M. P. Carruthers, M. G. Cubitt).

1989 Tyne & Wear Tynemouth, ♀, trapped 23rd July, photo. (M. P. Carruthers, M. G. Cubitt,

L. Hall, A. Hutt); ♀, trapped 26th July, photo., sound-recorded (M. P. Carruthers, M. G. Cubitt, A. Hutt).

1990 Tyne & Wear Tynemouth, ♀, trapped, night of 6th/7th July, photo., sound-recorded (M. P. Carruthers, M. G. Cubitt, D. Hirst), also 1991, 1992, 1993.

1991 Tyne & Wear Tynemouth, ♀, trapped, night of 30th/31st July (M. P. Carruthers, M. G. Cubitt, P. Harris *et al.*), same as 1990.

1992 Tyne & Wear Tynemouth, ♀, trapped, night of 29th/30th July, photo., sound-recorded, blood sample taken (M. P. Carruthers, M. G. Cubitt, A. Hutt), same as 1991.

(Northwest Pacific Ocean; winters western tropical Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean) Exemplary research and documentation involving worldwide enquiries, covering the very difficult group of seabirds to which this species belongs, enabled both the BBRC and the BOURC to accept this remarkable series of identifications without undue heartache. It still begs the question concerning how many may really be visiting British waters on a regular basis, if three individuals of this distant species can be tape-lured at this one locality in the space of two years. The reappearance of the 1990 bird in three subsequent years is maybe not so remarkable for a 'lost' seabird (cf. Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus*, Lesser Crested *Sterna bengalensis* and Bridled Terns *S. anaethetus* and, of course, Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophrys*). Surely it is only a matter of time before another East Coast tape attracts the species?

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 172, 3)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, ♂, 23rd June (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Cornwall Skewjack, ♂, 17th April to 1st May (R. Andrew, D. S. Flumm *et al.*).

Lancashire Leighton Moss, ♂, 23rd April to 2nd May (J. W. Bateman, B. & Mrs M. Holden, Miss J. C. Horrabin *et al.*).

1990 Cumbria Cark-in-Cartmel, ♀, 25th March to 11th April (Miss C. Halliday, F. Tinker).

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1992 Cork Sherkin Island, ♂, 20th-21st April.

1992 Wexford Carnsore Point, ♂, 11th April.

1989 Cork Inchigaggin Marsh, ♂, 4th May.

(Western Eurasia, Africa and Australia; winters Africa and southern Asia) Three overshooting males all in the West, presumably originating from Iberia. The Dutch population crashed to just two pairs in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 37) and that in France has also declined, which will no doubt reduce British East Coast occurrences accordingly. Although there were eight in 1988, three is about the average in recent years. The early female in 1990 followed close on the heels of a dead female at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 16th March, and, intriguingly, three of the four March records since 1987 have involved females.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 324, 6)

Cornwall St Ervan, adult, 10th-24th April (S. M. Christophers, C. Moncaster, P. O'Shea).

Devon Kingsbridge, second-summer, 25th March to 30th April (A. S. C. Barker, D. & S. Churchill *et al.*).

Hampshire See 1992 Hampshire below.

Kent Dungeness, second-summer, 26th May (G. Hollamby, R. J. Price, D. Walker *et al.*).

Orkney Loch of Hindland, Mainland, adult, 28th March, dead 29th (R. G. Adam, K. & Mrs J. Johnston, E. R. Meek *et al.*), specimen retained by E. R. Meek.

Shetland Ronas Voe, remains of adult, 20th June (P. V. Harvey, D. Suddaby, A. Williamson *et al.*), now at Royal Scottish Museum.

Sussex, East Rye, adult, 10th September (D. J. Funnell).

1990 Cumbria Dalston, juvenile, 20th-21st October, photo. (J. Hamer, D. Hickson, B. Marrs).

1992 Durham Chester-le-Street, first-winter, 13th November, photo. (E. Appleby).

1992 Hampshire Woodmill, Southampton, juvenile, 15th November to at least 9th February 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 454), to 8th December only; relocated Ichen Valley Country Park late January to 10th February (per D. J. Unsworth).

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1990 Cork Minane Bridge, adult, 22nd-25th March.

(South Eurasia, Africa and the Americas; European population winters in Africa) An erratic overshoot. The 1990 total reaches 64, but there were only three in 1991. A notable lack of juveniles and first-summerers this year.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens* (1, 2, 0)

(North and Central America, and West Indies) In the Channel Islands, an immature was at Grouville Marsh, Jersey, from 17th to 21st August 1992 and at St Martin's, Guernsey, from 13th to 24th September 1992. With the three recent West Palearctic records at five-year intervals (1982, 1987 and 1992), will the next be in 1997?

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (2, 71, 3)

Avon Littleton, 24th-27th April (M. P. Lawlor, A. J. Musgrove, T. Williamson *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, 1st May (M. C. Buckland, B. E. Wright); presumed same, Sandwich Bay, 2nd (K. B. Ellis *et al.*).

Leicestershire Rutland Water, 3rd-15th April (Mr & Mrs D. Charles, Mr & Mrs H. V. Higgins, L. Rowley *et al.*).

1992 Gwynedd Aberdaron, 2nd-4th May (R. Bashford, A. Dodd, N. Goodyear *et al.*).

1992 Hampshire Farlington Marshes, 22nd May (I. Lakin, C. M. C. Patrick).

(Almost cosmopolitan in tropics; nearest breeders in north of France) The two 1992 records nearly complete documentation of the influx in that year: a Humberside record remains outstanding. The pattern of occurrence of this species reflects its erratic dispersions, with a peak of 14 in 1986 (mainly in autumn and winter), then just four in the next five years before the record 20 in 1992, now followed by three more spring overshoots in 1993.

The presence of an individual of the race *B. i. coromandus* in Mid and South Glamorgan during 18th May to 5th June provided an identification pitfall for some observers; it had probably originated from a collection in North Devon. A long-staying Worestershire bird of late 1993 has yet to be dealt with.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 51, 9)

Devon Slapton Ley, 24th-25th April (R. Behenna *et al.*), also in Dorset. Braunton, 21st-28th November, photo. (C. A. Chivers, E. F. Davis, J. G. Smale), same, Taw Estuary, 4th-5th December (per P. W. Ellicott).

Dorset Chesil Fleet, 17th-22nd April (D. & J. Scragg *et al.*), also in Devon.

Durham/Yorkshire, North Hutton Magna, 16th May (G. D. Moore), same as North Yorkshire below.

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 11th-12th July, photo. (Mr & Mrs Wallis, K. M. Wilson *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, intermittently, 26th April to 3rd May, photo. (S. J. M. Gantlett, M. A. Golley *et al.*), also at Blakeney, Holkham, Brancaster and Titchwell (per G. E. Dunmore). Feltwell Anchor, 22nd December to 13th February 1994 (J. B. Kemp, D. King, D. Roper *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, 22nd-23rd April, photo. (R. Handy, R. J. Hathway *et al.*).

Somerset Steart, 19th September (N. E. & Mrs B. K. Wall). Sutton Bingham Reservoir, 22nd-29th October (I. Tinsley, B. J. Widden *et al.*).

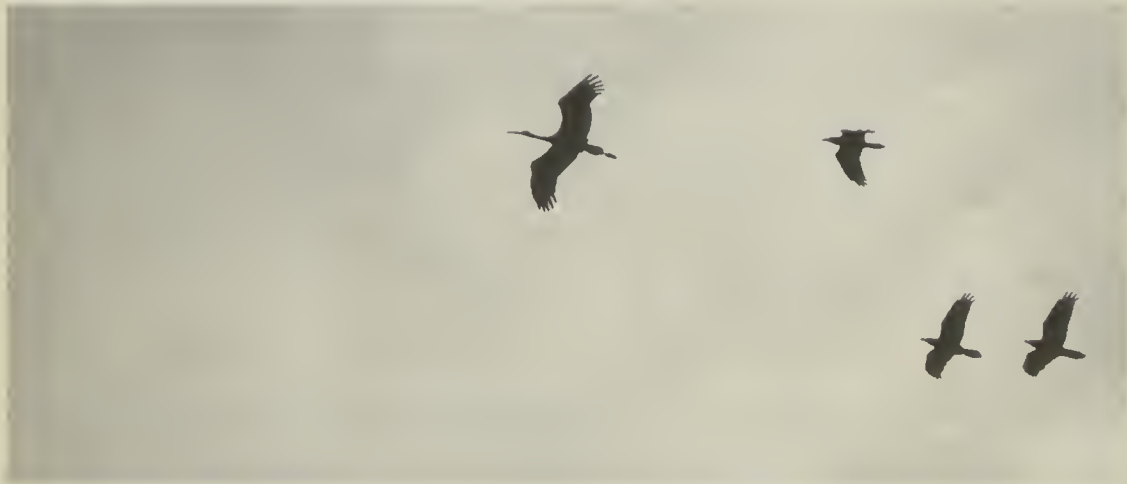
Yorkshire, North Hutton Magna, 16th-17th May (G. D. Moore, N. J. Morgan, T. & Mrs

J. A. Wright *et al.*, same, Aldborough St John, 19th-22nd (per N. J. Morgan).

1992 Tayside Loch of Kinnordy, 2nd June (S. Taylor), presumed same as Ythan Estuary, Grampian, 10th-15th (*Brit. Birds* 86: 457).

(Almost cosmopolitan; extremely local in Europe) Even allowing for some duplication, this seems to be a record year. The two wintering individuals in 1992/93 and 1993/94 follow the recent trends in Belgium and the Netherlands, no doubt all connected with the record wintering population in southern France.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (26, 82, 9)



127. Immature Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, with Common Ravens *Corvus corax*, Land's End, Cornwall, October 1993 (P. Palmer)

Cornwall St Buryan, adult, 24th August (A. Frisby, D. J. Odell). Porthcurno and Porthgwarra area, immature, 13th-14th October, photo. (P. & S. Palmer, G. C. Stephenson *et al.*) (plate 127).

Hampshire Sleaford and Frith End area, Alice Holt Forest, immature, 1st-2nd July (C. Rose, M. F. Wearing, L. Whittle).

Kent Cliffe, age uncertain, 21st July (P. J. Casselton, S. Rowland).

Somerset Shapwick Heath, juvenile, 18th August (J. A. McGeoch *et al.*), possibly same as Isle of Wight. Sharpham, second-year, 13th September, photo. (G. Rix).

Sussex, East Icklesham, 16th September (J. Coatesworth per O. Mitchell), same as West Sussex.

Sussex, West Shoreham-by-Sea, age uncertain, 16th September (R. H. Eyre-Walker); same, Pagham Harbour, 16th (T. J. Edwards), same as East Sussex.

Wight, Isle of Bembridge, juvenile, 26th August to 4th September (Dr D. T. Biggs, J. M. Cheverton, G. Sparshott *et al.*). Alum Bay, age uncertain, 4th October (M. James).

1991 Dyfed Skokholm, 27th-28th April (*Brit. Birds* 85: 512), same, Skomer, 29th (W. Bush, J. Paterson, J. Waddington *et al.*).

1991 Norfolk Santon Downham, 3rd July (*Brit. Birds* 85: 512), same, Swanton Novers, 4th-18th (D. J. Holman *et al.*).

(Eurasia and Southern Africa; winters Africa) Earlier presumptions elsewhere that the August Cornwall and Isle of Wight sightings were of the same bird were not borne out by the observed bare-part coloration (dull red bill and legs on the Cornish bird, but the Wight individual manifestly juvenile and more closely resembling that in Somerset a few days earlier). All the records were in autumn (July-October), with a blank in spring, but estimating just how many were involved is difficult, even with such a large and obvious species; different individuals can appear at the same locality within a few days or weeks, such as the Somerset ones listed here.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 61, 0)

1991 Norfolk Ouse Washes, 12th January (J. A. Rowlands), same as 19th December 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 458).

1992 Norfolk Burgh St Peter Marshes, 8th May (T. W. Fairless per P. R. Allard), same as Suffolk.

1992 Suffolk Minsmere, 6th May; same, Carlton Marshes, 6th-8th (*Brit. Birds* 86: 457); same, Walberswick, 6th (C. Waller per P. W. Murphy).

(Almost cosmopolitan, but nearest breeders in Camargue, wintering in Africa) No residents, no new birds; the first total absence since 1971.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

B. b. nigricans (1, 57, 1)

Individuals showing characters of the North American and East Siberian race *B. b. nigricans* were recorded as follows:

Hampshire See West Sussex.

Norfolk Lynn Point, adult, 14th February (C. Donner), presumed same as 1992 below. Burnham Norton and Burnham Overy, adult, 3rd February to 6th March (S. Lane, Dr R. Riddington, J. P. Taylor *et al.*).

Suffolk Felixstowe, adult, 22nd-24th January (S. H. Piotrowski), presumed same as 1992 below.

Sussex, West Thorney Island, adult, 16th October to at least 6th March 1994 (C. B. Collins *et al.*), also Hayling Island, Hampshire, presumed same as 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 459).

1989 Norfolk Lynn Point, adult, 29th January to 12th February (D. J. Holman *et al.*), presumed same as 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 448).

1989 Strathclyde Loch Gruinart, Islay, adult, 30th November to at least 23rd February 1990, possibly since late October (R. H. Hogg, Dr M. A. Ogilvie *et al.*).

1990 Norfolk Salthouse, adult, 27th-28th January (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

1990 Strathclyde See 1989 Strathclyde above.

1991 Dorset The Fleet, adult, 23rd November to at least 31st December (B. Spencer *et al.*).

1992 Essex Crouch Estuary, adult, 17th January (J. Torino).

1992 Norfolk Lynn Point, adult, 19th January to 22nd March (C. Donner per G. E. Dunmore), presumed same as 1989 above.

1992 Suffolk Felixstowe, adult, since 8th December 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 459), to 14th January only.

(Arctic North America and East Siberia; winters USA and East Asia) A pretty standard set of returnees, the Islay bird presumably originating from Nearctic stock. Also an adult at Havre des Pas and Goose Green Marsh, Jersey, Channel Islands, from 14th November 1992 to 23rd January 1993, presumed a returning individual last recorded 6th February 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 459).

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (15, 25, 1)

Cumbria Burgh Marsh, adult, intermittently, 25th January to 6th March; same, Rockcliffe Marsh, 22nd-27th April (per T. Dean), presumed returning individual last recorded as first-winter, Rockcliffe Marsh, 19th April 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 459).

Dumfries & Galloway Southwick, adult, 1st January; same, Mersehead, 2nd, 4th, Caulkerbush, 8th-10th, Caerlaverock, 10th-11th February, 25th September to 24th November, 30th December to 1994 (S. Cooper, R. Hesketh *et al.* per P. N. Collin) (plate 128), same as Cumbria.

Essex Old Hall Marshes, adult, 12th January to 12th February (I. Hawkins, D. Low, D. Wood *et al.*), also in Kent.

Kent Sheppey, adult, 26th-28th December (D. S-H. Coates *et al.*), same as Essex.

1992 Dumfries & Galloway Individual first seen in 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 459) was at Caulkerbush and Mershead, 18th November to 31st December (per P. N. Collin).

(West Siberia; winters Southeast Europe) The second and third winters for



128. Adult Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*, with Barnacle Geese *B. leucopsis*, Caerlaverock, Dumfries & Galloway, October 1993 (S. M. D. Alexander)

the Solway bird, and a newcomer with Brent Geese *B. bernicla* on the East Coast, where most of the other recent ones have occurred. Following a run of records during 1984-87, we appear to be seeing another surge of records, but escapes are a problem and two presumed escapees were an adult at Amberley Wild Brooks, West Sussex, from 18th to at least 23rd December 1993 and one at Fisherwick, Staffordshire, on 31st August and 17th October 1992.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 241, 4)

Cornwall Hayle, ♂, 23rd May (A. S. C. Barker, J. Healan *et al.*).

Fife Burntisland, ♂, since 10th October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 460), 3rd-5th January, 1st February (D. E. Dickson, M. Ramage); presumed same, Stenhouse Reservoir, 22nd January, 24th-27th February, 13th March (per D. E. Dickson); first-winter ♂, 5th January, presumed same as 30th October to 3rd November 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 460); ♂, since 30th October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 460), 5th January (D. E. Dickson); two ♂♂, 16th to 31st October, presumed same as above; one or other, Lochore Meadows, 17th to at least 20th November (per D. E. Dickson).

Humberside Flamborough Head, ♂, 22nd-23rd May (D. Beaumont, B. Richards *et al.*).

Kent Minnis Bay, ♂, 8th-9th January (M. J. Baldock, D. C. Gilbert), probably same as 1992 Kent below.

Lancashire Martin Mere, ♂, 22nd February to 17th March (D. J. Rigby *et al.*), presumed same as 1992 below.

Shetland Fetlar, ♂, 13th-14th February (B. H. Thomason).

1975 Lancashire Martin Mere, ♂, 23rd December (A. Blee, S. J. Riley, D. Wilkinson).

1990 Kent Elmley, ♂, 11th-21st April (C. G. Bradshaw, A. J. Fossey, R. Gomes *et al.*).

1992 Central Region Gartmore Dam, ♂, 10th, 22nd October (J. Calladine, C. Wernham).

1992 Grampian Loch of Skene, ♂, 14th November to at least 19th December (G. F. Allen, J. Oates *et al.*).

1992 Kent Elmley, ♂, 13th-29th December (R. Gomes, J. A. Rowlands *et al.*), presumed same as 1990 above; also 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 514).

1992 Lancashire Martin Mere, ♂, 24th February (C. G. Tomlinson).

1992 Strathclyde Balgray Reservoir, ♂, 3rd-4th August (J. J. Sweeney *et al.*).

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Cork Rosscarbery, ♂, 17th January to March and from October to 1994.

Fermanagh Lower Lough Erne, ♂, 25th November.

1992 Cork Rostellan and Whitegate, Cork Harbour, ♂, 29th November to 1993.

(North America; winters USA and Central America) With several males and an unknown number of females obviously permanently lost and associating with flocks of Eurasian Wigeons *A. penelope*, the possibility of hybrid origin for some claims seems set to develop into a probability. One trapped British bird has already been exposed as a hybrid, and others have been suspected in the field. Assessing the origins and movements of wildfowl is even more difficult than for Asiatic passerines.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 163, 3)

Avon Blagdon Lake, ♀, 1st May to 10th October, photo., paired with Northern Shoveler *A. clypeata*, mating observed, 1st, 22nd May (A. H. Davies, A. J. Musgrove *et al.*). Chew Valley Lake, first-winter ♂, 9th-11th October (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, ♂, 29th May to 16th October, photo. (R. Homan, D. B. Paynter *et al.*).

1992 Hampshire Dibden Bay, ♀, 18th-21st May (R. P. Bowman).

(North America; winters south to Brazil) The comparable lengths of stay of the Blagdon and Slimbridge birds are of interest and may raise the question of their being escapes. Mating with Northern Shoveler was also recorded in Cambridgeshire in 1988, when young were reared (*Brit. Birds* 86: 462).

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (1, 323, 8)

Cleveland Hartlepool, ♂, 8th May, photo. (M. J. Gee *et al.*), probably same as Durham.

Cornwall Drift Reservoir, ♂, since 14th October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 462), to 5th March, same, Stithians Reservoir, 13th March to 10th May, 28th September to 1st October, Argal Reservoir, 14th March, Loe Pool, 16th January, 25th May to 8th September, 15th October to 1994 (per S. M. Christophers).

Cumbria River Kent, Kendal, ♂, from 25th November 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 462), intermittently, 1st January to 2nd April, same, Killington Reservoir, intermittently, 2nd January to 3rd May, same, Whinfell Tarn, 18th-19th January, same, Fisher Tarn, intermittently, 12th March to 20th April, same, Birds Park Reservoir, 4th April (I. R. Kinley, J. Lishman, C. Raven *et al.*), presumed same, River Kent, Kendal, 25th November to 1994 (per T. Dean). Earlier presumption that this is same as regular Lancashire individual (*Brit. Birds* 86: 462) now invalid.

Durham Hurworth Burn Reservoir, ♂, 18th-22nd May (R. M. Ward), probably same as Cleveland.

Greater Manchester Heaton Park, ♂, 6th-8th January (P. Berry, P. Robinson), same, Amberswood Lake, Wigan, 7th April (per Mrs A. J. Smith), same, Doffcocker Lodge, 18th-21st April (J. Palfreman *et al.*), same, Horrocks' Flash, Wigan, 3rd June (Mrs A. J. Smith), same, High Rid Reservoir, Horwich, 27th November (G. Leather). Also in Lancashire.

Hampshire Timsbury Gravel-pit, ♂, since 14th October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 462), to 7th March (J. Lewis, D. A. Thelwell *et al.* per J. M. Clark), 17th May to 16th June, there or Fishlake Meadows, 3rd November to at least 31st December (per J. M. Clark), same, Mockbeggar Lake, Blashford, 27th March (R. P. Bowman). Fleet Pond, ♂, 18th-19th May (G. Rowland, M. Scott *et al.*), possibly same as Hertfordshire.

Hertfordshire Stocker's Lake, ♂, 14th-17th May, photo. (R. Drew *et al.*), possibly same as Fleet Pond, Hampshire.

Highland Inverdrue, ♂, 17th April (D. M. Pullan), presumed same, Loch Morlich, 12th-18th, 30th October (D. M. Pullan), 4th December (per Z. Bhatia), same as 1992 below.

Lancashire Wayoh, Lower Rivington and Short Clough Reservoirs and Birkacre Lodge, ♂, intermittently, since 1992 (see below) to 19th April, presumed same, Hoddlesden, Holden Wood and Wayoh Reservoirs, intermittently, 12th September to 1994 (per M. Jones). Also in Greater Manchester.

Lincolnshire Covenham Reservoir, ♂, 24th April (L. Marshall *et al.*), probably same as Norfolk.
Norfolk Wroxham Broad and Strumpshaw Fen. ♂, intermittently, 8th January to 26th March (D. J. Holman, J. R. Williamson *et al.*), same as 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 462), same, Wroxham and Hoveton Great Broad, 28th December to 1994 (N. Bowman, P. J. Heath *et al.*), probably same, Welney, 13th, 16th April (J. B. Kemp *et al.*), Titchwell, 25th (A. I. Bloomfield *et al.*), probably same as Lincolnshire.

Strathclyde Loch an Torr, Mull, ♂, 30th May to 2nd June (R. Barnes, D. & L. Primrose).

Tyne & Wear Marine Park Lake, South Shields, ♀, 8th January to 30th November (per A. L. Armstrong), presumed returning individual last recorded Tynemouth Park, 29th September 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 462).

Western Isles Loch an Tiumpán, Lewis, ♂, 8th November (P. Cunningham, R. D. Wemyss).

1978 Dyfed Pembroke, ♂, 26th February (R. Elliott), presumed same as Bosherton Pond, 1977 to 5th February (*Brit. Birds* 72: 514-515).

1986 Western Isles Loch Beo, South Uist, ♂, 4th May (S. Dix).

1989 Yorkshire, West Pungy's Gravel-pit, ♂, at least 24th April (*Brit. Birds* 83: 452), same, Swillington Park Lake, 31st March (*Brit. Birds* 84: 462), presumed same, Fairburn Ings, 26th April to 3rd May, Allerton Bywater, 3rd July (J. A. Rowlands *et al.*), subsequently elsewhere (*Brit. Birds* 84: 462); 1992 and 1993 details for this individual not yet received.

1990 Tyne & Wear Marine Park Lake, South Shields, ♂, 6th April (R. M. Patient), previously not accepted (*Brit. Birds* 86: 539), probably same as 11th April to 7th May and later (*Brit. Birds* 84: 462).

1992 Cumbria River Kent, Kendal, ♂, 25th November to 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 462), same, Fisher Tarn, 2nd, 13th December (per T. Dean).

1992 Highland Loch Morlich, ♂, last recorded Loch Insh, 22nd December 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 515), 15th January (I. Rowlands), 30th (per Z. Bhatia), same, Loch Vaa, early March (J. Stacey per D. M. Pullan), Loch Morlich, intermittently, 29th October to 5th December (D. M. Pullan). Also in 1993 above.

1992 Lancashire Holden Wood and Short Clough Reservoirs, ♂, 12th January to 5th May, same, Wayoh Reservoir, 30th-31st January (per M. Jones), presumed same as Wayoh Reservoir, 22nd December 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 515), same, Holden Wood and Short Clough Reservoirs, 19th October to early December, Wayoh Reservoir, 30th December to 1993 (per M. Jones).

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Cork Dunmanway, ♂, 26th-27th December.

Donegal Dunfanaghy, ♂, 14th April and 26th October.

Fermanagh Lough Acrussel, Enniskillen, ♂, 18th-19th February.

1992 Kerry Killarney, ♂, 17th April (*Brit. Birds* 86: 463), also present on 7th June and from 26th October to 1993.

1990 Armagh Ellis's Gut, Lough Neagh, ♂, 12th May.

(North America; winters to Central America) In Britain, seven 'residents', four spring migrants, just one new autumn arrival and a return to male dominance. Records of this species will no longer be considered by the BBRC with effect from 31st December 1993; full details and descriptions of all birds should, of course, still be submitted to county recorders for 1994 and subsequent records.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 5, 2)

Leicestershire Rutland Water, ♂, age uncertain, 14th-17th February, possibly since 23rd January (J. A. Forryan, R. M. Fray, S. M. Lister *et al.*).

Shetland Loch of Spiggie, first-year ♂, 9th-13th May (M. Mellor *et al.*).

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Down Male first reported in February-April 1988 again present at a number of sites, as in all intervening winters.

(Western North America; winters south and east to Colombia) With seven records since 1987, compared with only five of Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* between the first in 1955 and 1963, one wonders what the future may hold; but are they all as wild as we would like to believe? If the Shetland bird

was that from Rutland Water, was it on northbound spring migration or heading for home?

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 70, 4)

Fife Tayport, ♂, discontinuously, 8th February to 6th March (R. McCurley *et al.*); presumed same, 13th November (R. Harvey per D. E. Dickson), presumed returning 1992 individual (*Brit. Birds* 86: 464), also in Grampian.

Grampian Burghead, ♂, 19th January (R. J. Evans), presumed same as Lossiemouth. Lossiemouth, ♂, since 6th December 1992 (see below) to March (per M. J. H. Cook *et al.*). Spey Bay, ♂, 29th May to 9th June (M. J. H. Cook, D. M. Pullan), same as Lossiemouth. Ythan Estuary, ♂, 23rd March to 11th July (G. & R. P. Clay, J. C. Lowen *et al.*), presumed long-standing returning individual last recorded end of May 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 464). Donmouth, ♂, 13th May (I. A. Roberts), presumed same, Ythan Estuary, 19th, 26th June (Dr I. M. Phillips, K. D. Shaw *et al.*), probably same as second 1992 individual last recorded end of May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 464). Blackdog, ♂, 5th December (T. Pizzari), presumed same as Ythan Estuary above.

Highland Brora, ♂, since 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 464), 27th January, 10th-17th February, 24th December (S. Blamire, D. M. Pullan *et al.*).

Shetland Sand Voe, ♀, dead, 20th January (H. R. Harrop, J. Poyner, D. Suddaby *et al.*). Ronas Voe, second-winter ♀, 1st-10th May (P. M. Ellis *et al.*). Raewick, Redayre and Tresta area, ♂, since 26th November 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 464) to 6th June, 10th November to 1994 (per D. Suddaby), presumed same, Lang Sound, Burra, 11th July to 2nd September (J. M. Drew, M. Williamson *et al.*).

Strathclyde Salum Bay, Tiree, ♂, 26th April to 7th June (R. A. Broad, G. Evans *et al.*). Port Ellen, Islay, ♂, 13th October, photo. (R. Seifert, U. Steschulat).

1989 Highland Loch Fleet and Embo, ♂ (*Brit. Birds* 83: 454), presumed same, Brora, 28th June (J. A. Rowlands *et al.*).

1992 Grampian Lossiemouth, ♂, 27th September to 3rd October (*Brit. Birds* 86: 464), 6th December to 1993 (per D. M. Pullan), thus not same as Embo, Highland. Ythan Estuary, ♂, 24th March to end of May, 3rd to end of May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 464), both presumed returning 1991 individuals (*Brit. Birds* 85: 519).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Two new females from Shetland, a few long-lived males and possibly the same male on Tiree and Islay. The excellent report of this last bird by two Swedes left Committee members wondering how well *they* would be able to report a rarity in Swedish. The radical reduction from the 1958-91 total of 165 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 464) to that of only 70 for 1958-92 (above) is in line with the recommendations set out by D. Suddaby, K. D. Shaw, P. M. Ellis and Keith Broekie (*Brit. Birds* 87: 418-430). Certain adjustments to the 1991 total of ten (*Brit. Birds* 85: 519), now reduced to six, and that for 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 464), down from four to two, will be detailed in next year's Report.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

M. n. americana (0, 5, 0)

Individuals showing the characters of the North American and East Siberian race *M. n. americana* were recorded as follows:

Highland Dornoch, ♂, 21st April (S. Blamire, D. M. Pullan), presumed returning 1991 individual below.

1979 Grampian Findhorn, ♂, 29th December (*Brit. Birds* 75: 495) now considered inadequately documented.

1980 Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, ♂, 16th September (*Brit. Birds* 75: 495) now considered inadequately documented.

1982 Cheshire Frodsham, ♂, 5th February (*Brit. Birds* 81: 549) now considered inadequately documented.

1990 Highland Dornoch, ♂, at least 15th April (R. J. Evans *et al.*), presumed same as Culbin Bar, 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 455).

1991 Dyfed Newgale, ♂, 25th December to 9th February 1992 (D. J. Astins *et al.*).

1991 Highland Embo and Dornoch, ♂, 23rd March to 2nd May (P. J. Benstead, W. J. Brame, L. Cox *et al.*), presumed same, Dornoch, 11th December (D. M. Pullan, I. T. Rowlands), presumed same as 1990 above.

1992 Dyfed See 1991 Dyfed above.

1992 Highland Burchhead Bay, ♂, at least 8th December (R. J. Evans *et al.*), possibly same as 1990-91 Highland.

(Northern Holarctic) With the reassessment of the first three previously accepted claims, noted above, that in Lothian on 31st December 1987 to 1st January 1988 becomes the first, and the total becomes five. Regular appearances with flocks of our usual nominate race may well be expected, however, as with Surf Scoter *M. perspicillata*, but, to repeat previous warnings: good views and precise notes are needed to exclude bright-billed nominate males.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 171, 17)

Cleveland Wilton, 19th June (M. A. Blick).

Cornwall Porthgwarra, 27th May (W. R. Wilkins, L. P. Williams).

Devon Prawle Point, 28th-29th April (D. Hemsley, P. J. Holmes *et al.*).

Essex Walton-on-the-Naze, 20th April (A. D. Beardwell). Hadleigh Downs, 24th June (J. Seward).

Hampshire Harefield, Southampton, 30th April (D. A. Christie). Beaulieu Road, 7th May (W. Percy), probably same, Burley, 9th (Mrs J. Corway).

Kent Dover, 26th May (M. Kennett). Grain, 29th May (P. A. Gammage, Dr A. M. Hanby, G. C. Stephenson). Worth, 16th June (J. Buegg, R. H. Lawrence, J. H. Van der Dol). St Margaret's, 20th June (C. G. Bradshaw, A. Brown, M. May *et al.*). Bishopstone, 11th July (D. C. Gilbert). Dungeness, 7th August (D. Walker *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 30th April (D. W. Buckingham); 16th May (Dr R. Riddington, R. K. Watson), possibly same as Norfolk.

Norfolk Blakeney, 20th April (M. E. S. Rooney), presumed same, High Kelling, 22nd, Wells, Burnham Norton, Burnham Deepdale, 23rd (per G. E. Dunmore), Little Snoring, 25th (D. Bryant, T. C. Davies, R. Walker *et al.*). Holkham Meads, 16th May (A. I. Bloomfield *et al.*), same, Brancaster and other north-coast localities, 16th (J. & P. McOwat *et al.*), probably same, Ringstead, 17th-18th (D. A. & Mrs J. Bridges, Miss B. Vevers, Miss P. F. Walton *et al.*).

Suffolk Aldeburgh, 22nd April (R. N. Macklin).

1991 Hampshire Farlington Marshes, 27th April (G. H. & R. P. Clay).

1992 Dorset Durlston, 5th-6th June (*Brit. Birds* 86: 465), was photographed, observers were P. Coc, Dr G. P. Green, G. Walbridge *et al.*

1992 Kent Stodmarsh area, 24th May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 466), 25th (G. J. A. Burton *et al.*).

(Most of Eurasia, Africa and Australia; winters Africa and southern Asia) A fairly standard set of records, with good tracking of those in north Norfolk, where blanket coverage is becoming the norm. The one in Norfolk in May was presumably that seen flying south at Gibraltar Point on the first date.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (many, 21, 3)

Borders Coldingham, first-year, 22nd-23rd September, possibly since 19th (P. R. Gordon).

Dyfed Skomer, second-winter or third-winter, 10th-11th November (J. Poole, S. J. Sutcliffe, D. Vaughan *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Grimwith Reservoir, Grassington, immature, 30th December (A. J. Musgrove, M. G. Prince *et al.*).

(Southwest Greenland, Iceland and northern Eurasia) Those in Yorkshire and Borders may well have been the same individual. Records from Scotland are not usually dealt with by this Committee as they are assumed to refer to birds from the reintroduction scheme, but the Borders bird, which was not wing-tagged, arrived on the East Coast during a flood of Honey-buzzards

Pernis apivorus and other large raptors of presumably Scandinavian origin, which suggests that it was more likely to be a genuine vagrant. With recent record populations in Scandinavian countries (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 87: 4), we must surely be set for more regular passage and wintering. Only seven have occurred in the previous seven years, 1986-92.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (3, 0, 0)

(Eastern Europe east to Western China; winters from Southern Europe south to Southern Africa and east to Southeastern China). The assessment of five separate reports in 1993 (Highland in May, Essex in June, and Humberside, Shetland and Leicestershire all in September: *Brit. Birds* 87: 458) is still in train. With the most recent previous record as long ago as 1952, and the species therefore currently in Category B, the significance of these five reports is obvious. The Scottish male in May was in display in Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* territories, which has a precedent in the Netherlands (*Dutch Birding* 9: 21-24). The arrival of two on 15th September coincided with a big East Coast arrival of large raptors associated with a strong easterly airstream from Scandinavia and produced the icing on the cake for yet another superb Shetland purple patch and the high point of several years' birding for one observer in Leicestershire. There were comparable influxes of Pallid Harriers into most north and eastern European countries in 1993, with a male nest-building in Germany and a successful mixed pairing with a Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus* in Finland.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 508, 4)

Hampshire Lower Test Marshes, ♀, 21st June (P. Combridge, S. King).

Kent St Margaret's, ♀, 29th June (J. R. Chantler, R. Heading).

Norfolk Wolferton, ♀, 11th June (P. Fisher).

Wight, Isle of Sandown, first-summer ♂, 5th June (D. J. Hughes).

1986 Dorset Portland, ♂, 9th May (*Brit. Birds* 80: 531), now considered inadequately documented.

1989 Cambridgeshire Little Paxton, first-summer ♂, at least 28th-30th May (*Brit. Birds* 84: 467), 2nd June (J. A. Rowlands).

1989 Gloucestershire Cotswold Water Park, ♂, 25th May (D. Rhymes).

1989 Norfolk Cley and Wiveton, ♂, 17th-19th June (L. G. R. Evans, S. J. M. Gantlett, D. J. Holman *et al.*).

1991 Dorset Hengistbury Head, ♂, 28th May (E. D. Lloyd). Yetminster, ♂, 16th October (B. J. Matthews).

1992 Bedfordshire Thurlcigh, ♀, 13th June, photo. (P. S. Jarman).

1992 Cambridgeshire King's Ripton, ♀, 17th May (S. M. Elsom). Upware Marshes and Wicken Fen, ♂, 26th May (J. L. F. Parslow). Ouse Washes, ♂, 16th May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 466), first noted Sutton Gault, 16th-17th, then Ouse Washes, 24th-25th (R. M. Patient), also same as Welney, Norfolk, 26th-31st (*Brit. Birds* 86: 469) (per R. J. Allison). Ouse Washes, first-summer ♂, 16th May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 466), first noted Sutton Gault, 16th-17th, then Ouse Washes, 23rd-27th (per R. J. Allison), same, Earith, 1st June (J. L. F. Parslow). Ouse Washes, ♀, 16th May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 466), locality was Sutton Gault, present to 17th (per R. J. Allison).

1992 Cleveland Teesmouth, ♀, 10th-12th June, photo. (F. Bailey, M. A. Blick, T. G. Francis *et al.*).

1992 Cleveland/North Yorkshire Danby Beacon and Scaling Dam area, second-summer ♂, 14th-16th May, photo. (P. A. A. Baxter, W. Irving, I. Munson *et al.*).

1992 Essex Barling, ♀, 22nd May (S. Arlow).

1992 Hampshire Beaulieu Road area, first-summer ♂, 17th May (P. E. Hutehings, A. Pink). Ocknell Plain, ♂, 22nd May (M. Baker), presumed same as Bishop's Dyke, 17th, Ashley Walk, 25th-26th (*Brit. Birds* 86: 467).

1992 Kent Minnis Bay, first-summer ♂, 14th May (N. Hando). Dungeness, first-summer ♂, 7th-9th September (N. E. Robinson, D. Walker *et al.*).

1992 Norfolk Blakeney Point, ♀, 14th May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 469), not same as Cley, 14th. Salthouse Heath, first-summer ♀, 14th-15th May (D. E. & M. J. Saunt, J. R. Williamson *et al.*). Welney, ♂, 26th-31st May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 469), see 1992 Cambridgeshire above. Swanton Novers and Guist area, first-summer ♀, 31st May to 8th June (D. J. Holman, H. P. Medhurst, J. P. Taylor *et al.*).

1992 Orkney St Ola, first-summer ♀, 27th-28th May (E. R. Meek, E. J. & S. J. Williams).

1992 Scilly St Martin's, first-summer ♀, 19th, 23rd May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 469), first noted 18th (R. D. Penhallurick).

1992 Yorkshire, North See 1992 Cleveland/North Yorkshire above.

(East Europe to Central Siberia; winters in Africa) Just four, and all in June: a rather abrupt return to rarity status. The record 1992 total (see *Brit. Birds* 87: 223-231) rises to 120 with late acceptances herein.

The Committee is grateful to D. J. Holman for providing details on a number of records of various species which can now appear in this Report, but which may otherwise have gone unrecorded forever in these pages.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 106, 1)

Grampian Ben Macdui area, Cairngorm, ♂, white-morph, 14th April (I. T. Rowlands *et al.*).

IRELAND

1992 Londonderry Magilligan Point, 18th-19th April (*Brit. Birds* 86: 474), first seen on 23rd February.

(Circumpolar Arctic) One on spring passage on the Cairngorm tundra, or had it wintered on that little-watched massif?

The publication of the colour morphs (white or grey) relating to the records of this species was abandoned as scientifically unnecessary after 1972. Recent renewed interest in this aspect, however, now prompts the update below, which is confined to those which can be ascribed unequivocally to white-morph individuals. (Owing to the lack of extant information, it is not at present possible to ascribe to this, or to the grey form, records at Glen Tanar, Grampian, on 18th April 1973, on Tiree, Strathclyde, during 27th-31st December 1973, and at sea off Western Isles in February 1973.) The following were all white-morph individuals:

Forties Oilfield, North Sea, 5th January 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 333); Williamston, Grampian, 24th November 1977 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 497); Sullom, Shetland, 20th January, same, Lanna, 12th February 1979; Foula, Shetland, 5th April 1979; Isle of May, Fife, 13th April 1979; Folkestone, Kent, 28th April 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 502-503); Achiltibnie, Wester Ross, Highland, 5th October 1980; at sea, North Atlantic, 57° 00' N 20° 00' W, 13th March 1980; near Balranald, North Uist, Western Isles, 27th May 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 465); Scatsta, Shetland, at least 15th March 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 497); Fair Isle, Shetland, 9th December 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 490); Rubh' Ard Mhicheil, South Uist, Western Isles, 7th April 1983; at sea, Sea area Forties, North Sea, 58° 41' N 01° 22' E, 3rd November 1982; at sea, North Atlantic, about 51° N 18' W, about 800 km west of Scilly, 9th-10th December 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 519); Trotternish, Skye, Highland, 17th June 1984; Graemsay, Orkney, at least 27th January 1984; Rendall and Evie, Orkney, 22nd-23rd April 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 541); St Agnes, Scilly, 2nd January, Tresco, 6th, 17th, 19th-20th January, St Mary's, 12th February 1985, probably same, Tresco, 7th April (*Brit. Birds* 79: 541); Berry Head, Devon, 31st March to 9th April 1986, probably same, Lundy, 11th-12th April (*Brit. Birds* 81: 522); Penlee Point, Cornwall, 16th October 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 532); Orphir, Orkney, 2nd April 1989; Gerinish and Drimsdale, South Uist, Western Isles, 13th-19th April 1989, presumed same, Grinish, North Uist, 24th; Poolewe, Wester Ross, Highland, 17th October 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 459); Trondra and Tingwall, Shetland, 16th-17th April 1990; Hoy, Orkney, 24th May to at least 7th June 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 468).

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* (many, 10, 0)**1976 Glamorgan, South** Llantwit Major, 7th-8th February (*Brit. Birds* 71: 497; 72: 518), 8th only.**1990 Hampshire** Lymington, 17th March, caught by cat, released unharmed, photo. (B. S. Duffin, E. J. Wiseman *et al.*).

(Eurasia, Africa and Australasia; European population winters in Africa) With only five records during the 31 years 1958-88, the five in the five years since then suggest that this species is still rare, but possibly a regular vagrant. Note, however, that, of the last five, four have been found self-trapped or dead. Are we failing to detect singing males in spring? This March record takes the 1990 total to a record two and was presumably associated with the extraordinary March arrivals of Alpine Swifts *Apus melba*, Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax* and Woodchat Shrikes *Lanius senator*.

Common Crane *Grus grus* (many, over 1242, -)**1986 Cheshire** Burton Point, at least 25th August (M. G. & Dr J. E. Turner *et al.*), presumed same as Shotwick and Shotton, Clwyd, 17th-28th (*Brit. Birds* 80: 532).

(Scandinavia east to central Siberia; winters Africa and Middle East east to Southeast Asia)

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 183, 11)**Cheshire/Clwyd** Inner Marsh Farm, pair and one other, intermittently, 22nd April to 13th May (K. G. Roberts *et al.*).**Cheshire** Sandbach Flashes, three, 25th April (N. Carter *et al.*), same, Frodsham, 25th, 1st May to 7th June (per A. M. Broome), same as Cheshire/Clwyd, also in Oxfordshire.**Cleveland** Teesmouth, intermittently, 23rd April to 4th May, photo. (T. Farooqi, I. J. Foster *et al.*), also in Durham.**Clwyd** See Cheshire/Clwyd above.**Cornwall** Goonhilly Downs, 20th-30th April (D. Lyne, A. R. & Mrs H. C. Pay *et al.*).**Devon** Braunton Marsh, 22nd April, photo. (J. M. Breeds).**Durham** Hurworth Burn Reservoir, 30th April to 1st May (A. L. Armstrong, N. Urwin *et al.*), same as Cleveland.**Greater Manchester** Hollingworth Lake, 3rd June (I. Kimber *et al.*), presumed one of Cheshire/Clwyd individuals.**Humberside** See Yorkshire, North, below.**Kent** Dungeness, 8th June (P. G. Akers, R. J. Price, D. Walker *et al.*), also in Suffolk.**Lancashire** Leighton Moss, 4th-6th June (S. J. Dodgson *et al.*), also in Oxfordshire.**Lincolnshire** North Coates, 21st April (W. Sterling), probably same as Cleveland.**Norfolk** Hardley Flood, 4th May, photo. (L. & M. Butler, D. Lovatt). Snettisham, 18th-21st August, photo. (M. Missin, J. Shepherd, R. Q. Skeen *et al.*), same, Hunstanton, 26th (S. Gillings, G. Hamlett, C. Jones), Scolt Head, 27th to mid September, 10th October (D. J. Holman, M. G. & Mrs L. Oxlade *et al.*), Holme, 18th September, 14th, 18th October (per G. E. Dunmore), Thornham and Titchwell, 17th September to 1994 (per G. E. Dunmore), presumed same as Northumberland.**Northumberland** Druridge Pool, 31st July to 16th August, photo. (M. P. Frankis *et al.*), also in Norfolk.**Oxfordshire** Shipston-on-Cherwell, 8th June (J. W. Brucker *et al.*), same as Lancashire. Radley, three, 8th-19th June (T. G. Ball *et al.*), presumed same as Cheshire/Clwyd.**Suffolk** Minsmere, 22nd April (D. T. Ireland). Shingle Street, 9th June (P. V. Harvey), same, Trimley Marshes, 10th, 13th (W. A. Last, M. T. Wright *et al.* per P. W. Murphy), same as Kent.**Yorkshire, North** Wheldrake Ings, three, 6th May (R. S. Slack *et al.*), presumed same as Cheshire/Clwyd, presumed same, Welton Water, near Hull, Humberside, 5th (per P. J. Dunn).**1987 Leicestershire** Warton, pair, 3rd June (S. M. Andrews), same as Warwickshire, 28th May to 4th June (*Brit. Birds* 82: 521).**1990 Kent** Cliffe, 18th May (P. Whiteman, B. E. Wright *et al.*).

(Southern Eurasia, Africa, Australia and the Americas; European population winters Africa) Tracking these great wanderers around the country is made easier when they are in recognisable parties or bear colour rings. The Shipston-on-Cherwell, Oxfordshire, individual had the same unique colour combination as that in Lancashire, and had been ringed as a nestling at Beauvoir-sur-Mer, Vendée, France, on 16th June 1989. The Dungeness bird had only three rings (there were four on the previous bird), and was the same as that subsequently seen in Suffolk. It is understood that, although no documentation has been received yet, the Cheshire/Clwyd trio, which showed advanced breeding behaviour, was first seen at Cemlyn Bay, Anglesey, Gwynedd, during 10th-21st April. The Oxfordshire connection with the records in the Northwest is remarkable. Occasional breeding attempts well outside the normal breeding range are a feature of this species' biology, and a paper detailing recent breeding records in the Netherlands and also mixed pairing of an escaped Black-necked Stilt *H. (h.) mexicanus* with a Black-winged Stilt has appeared in *Dutch Birding* (15: 193-197).

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* (0, 2, 1)

Norfolk Gimingham, 14th May to 3rd June, photo. (D. J. Holman, D. Nicholson, C. Payne, J. Self *et al.*) (plates 129 & 130), same, Weybourne, 3rd (per G. E. Dunmore), Blakeney Point, 4th (R. G. Millington *et al.*), Burnham Norton, 5th to 21st, 13th July to 13th August (B. Bland, V. Eve *et al.*), Titchwell and Thornham, 14th-17th (per G. E. Dunmore).

(South and East Asia; winters India east to Northern Australia) The coincidence of occurrence in time and locality of the Norfolk bird with the Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* mirrors the events of 1981. On the basis of the three records, a long stay seems to be the order of the day with this species. Owing to late submission, a report of what may have been the Norfolk bird in East Sussex during 29th-30th August is still under consideration.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (5, 21, 3)

Avon Blagdon Lake, juvenile, 28th August (R. Abram, R. M. Andrews, A. Bone *et al.*), presumed same, Chew Valley Lake, 28th (S. Preddy *et al.*).

Cornwall Sennen, juvenile, 10th October, probably since 9th, photo. (P. Aley, B. R. Field, P. A. St Pierre *et al.*).

Suffolk Livermere and Troston area, age uncertain, 6th-12th September, photo. (T. R. & Mrs J. Dean, J. R. Hunter, T. Stopher *et al.*).

(West Asia; winters Africa). Traditionally this species has been an autumn vagrant to Britain, so the three here are fairly typical. The Cornish bird represents the second successive autumn record for that county and there can be little doubt that a not-fully-identified pratincole in the nearby Nanquidno area on 9th October was the same bird as that at Sennen. It is worth noting that there was also a Collared Pratincole *G. pratincola* in Cornwall in October 1986.

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus* (9, 39, 1)

Shetland Hillwell and Brake area, 17th-18th March (A. Fitchett, D. Suddaby *et al.*).

(North America; winters USA and Central America) Still an exceptional rarity on this side of the Atlantic, with just six in the eight years 1985-92. The out-of-season occurrence pattern and catholic choice of habitat may well mean that a lesser percentage of those occurring is found than with other Nearctic shorebirds. One well twitched on Anglesey has yet to be reported with documentation.

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99 & 130. Above, Oriental Pratincole *Glaucola maldivarum*, Gimingham, Norfolk, May 1993 (top, Robin Chittenden; centre, Steve Young/Birdwatch)

11. Below, juvenile American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, St Mary's, Scilly, 14th October 1993 (R. C. Wilson)



Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius lescheuaultii* (0, 11, 0)

1992 Norfolk Cley, ♀ or first-summer, 5th-8th August (A. M. Stoddart *et al.*), presumed same as Essex and Kent (*Brit. Birds* 86: 477).

(Southern Russia east to Mongolia; winters Africa, Southern Asia and Australia) Sadly, no notes were ever submitted by the original Norfolk finders of this bird, a colour photograph of which was published in the 1992 Report (*Brit. Birds* 86: 475, plate 156).

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (3, 24, 1)

Humberside South Ferriby area, adult, 2nd, 18th-19th July (G. P. Catley, S. Roudledge *et al.*).

1990 Clwyd Oakenholt Marsh, adult, 2nd-11th August, photo. (I. Higginson *et al.*).

1992 Devon Bowling Green Marsh and Exe Estuary, adult, 29th July to 4th August (R. W. White *et al.*).

IRELAND

1991 Cork Kinsale Marsh, adult, 5th-8th October.

(North and Northeast Asia, and Alaska; winters Southern Asia, Australia and Western North America) The occurrence of an adult at the same locality in South Humberside as an adult American Golden Plover *P. dominica* five days later in mid summer echoes the events of July 1986 at Tetney, where the two species appeared in the same tidal creek at the same time. It is easier to search for bright breeding-plumaged Pacifics and Americans within midsummer flocks of European Golden Plovers *P. apricaria* on the East Coast than to look for juveniles in the four-figure and five-figure flocks of Europeans in October, and this no doubt goes some way to explaining the imbalance between the high totals of summer adults and the relative lack of autumn juveniles (of both species) in the East. The 1991 Irish record is of particular significance, being a late-autumn adult.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (3, 165, 4)

Humberside South Ferriby, adult, 24th July (J. Atkin, S. Lindop, K. Roberts *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, juvenile, 14th October to 4th November, photo. (M. A. Hardwick, D. R. Middleton *et al.*) (plate 131); presumed same, St Agnes, 26th October, photo. (C. & T. K. Bradshaw, M. Eccles, J. Gillbody).

Western Isles, West Gerinish, South Uist, first-summer, 3rd-19th May, photo. (T. J. Dix, R. Taylor *et al.*).

1990 Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, 22nd-24th September (S. J. Holloway), previously accepted as either American or Pacific Golden Plover (*Brit. Birds* 85: 525).

1991 Cheshire Penketh, juvenile, 13th October (J. Clarke).

1991 Northamptonshire Pitsford Reservoir, juvenile, 12th-13th October (*Brit. Birds* 86: 477), 22nd (F. C. Smith).

1992 Devon Northam Burrows, juvenile, 10th October (D. Murdoch, R. W. White).

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Cork Harbour View, juvenile, 26th September to 10th October.

1991-92 Tyrone The record for Annaghroe (*Brit. Birds* 86: 177) was entered as an accepted record, when in fact it had been rejected, and it should now be deleted.

(Arctic North America and extreme Northeast Asia; winters South America). A spring first-summer, a summer adult and two autumn juveniles: a good mix, but a poor total. The 1991 total reaches 12. The results of an extensive review of past British records of this and the previous species will be published shortly, when the statistics will be adjusted accordingly.

SURREY

89(B) LONDON ROAD,
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American or Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*/ *P. fulva* (6, 198, 5)

1990 Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, adult, 15th-16th July (S. Elsom, J. A. Rowlands, R. Spowage).

1990 Western Isles See American Golden Plover.

1992 Kent Dungeness, adult, 9th, 12th July (P. G. Akers, R. J. Price, R. Turner *et al.*).

The 1990 Cambridgeshire bird was most probably a Pacific Golden Plover, but contradictory aspects within the notes made specific acceptance impossible. The totals include those specifically identified.

Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria* (5, 31, 1)

Derbyshire Egginton, 17th April (J. S. Thornhill), presumed same as Lincolnshire, Norfolk.

Lincolnshire Kirkby-on-Bain and Coningsby area, 30th May to 2nd June (K. D. Durose *et al.*), 12th June (A. G. Ball), presumed same as Norfolk.

Norfolk Cley, 21st-23rd April (S. R. Mawby, A. N. Mellor *et al.*), same, Holkham, 24th-29th (A. E. Bloomfield, R. Peck *et al.*) (plates 132 & 133), Burnham Norton, 30th (V. Eve), North Wootton, 18th-20th May (P. Fisher, R. A. Image).

(Southeast Russia and West-Central Asia; winters Northeast Africa and Southwest Asia) Presumably, all the spring records in 1993 referred to the same stunning summer-plumaged adult. The majority of British records are in autumn (September/October), but most of those on the near-Continent are, like this bird, in spring (cf. *Dutch Birding* 6: 1-8).

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (2, 65, 4)

Cornwall Bude, juvenile, 20th-26th September, photo. (G. J. Conway, B. T. Craven, G. P. Sutton *et al.*).

Orkney Stronsay, 7th-8th June, photo. (J. F. Holloway, M. & Mrs L. Johnson, Miss J. Maples).

Scilly Treseo, adult, 20th-22nd August, photo. (R. J. Hathway, M. G. & Dr J. E. Turner *et al.*) (fig. 1; *Brit. Birds* 86: plate 230).

Suffolk Trimley Marshes, 13th-14th May (M. C. Marsh, N. Odin, B. J. Small *et al.*).

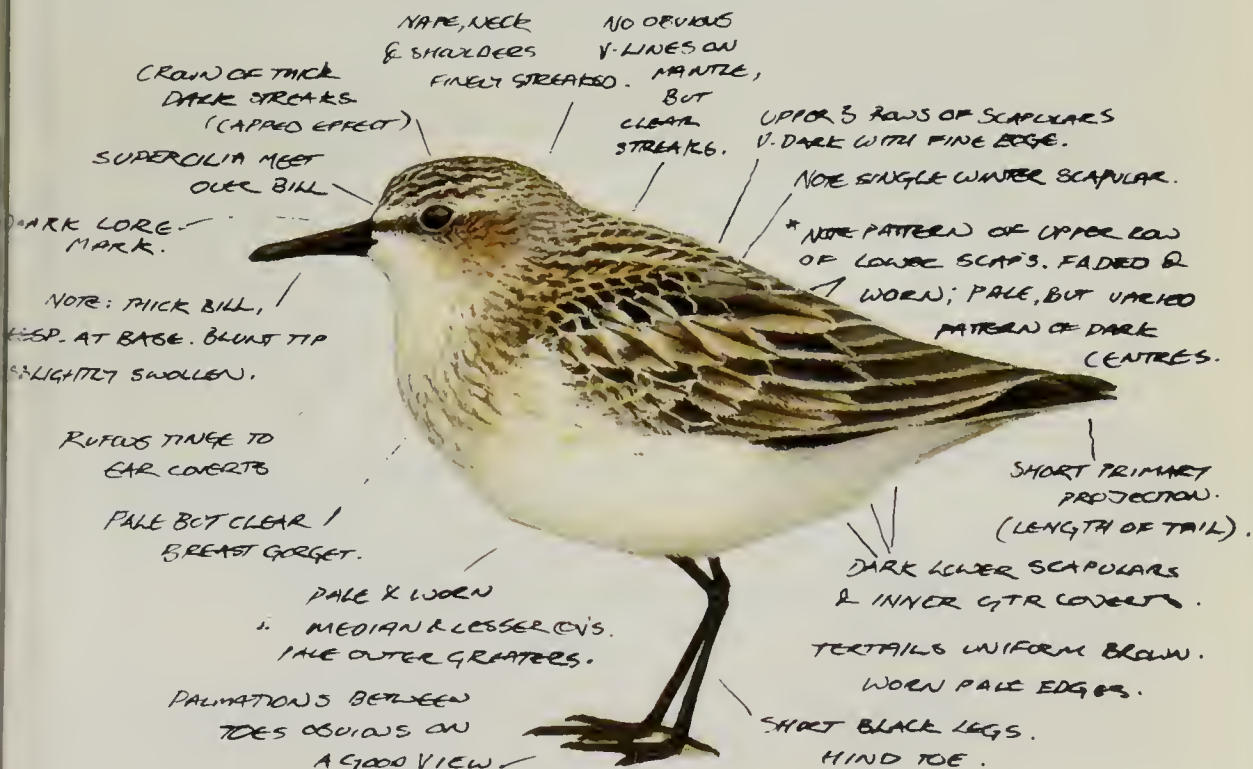


Fig. 1. Adult Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, Abbey Pool, Treseo, Scilly, 20th-22nd August 1993 (Ren Hathway)

(North America; winters Central and South America). Two spring records continue the recent trend, and include the first for Orkney.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* (1, 5, 0)

1975 Cheshire Sandbach Flashes, 28th-30th September (*Brit. Birds* 70: 447) now considered inadequately documented.

(North America; winters Southern USA and Central America) The total falls back to six, and avid wader-watchers await a long-staying mainland record of this, by far the rarest of the Nearctic peeps.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* (6, 28, 1)

Cornwall Hayle, juvenile, 22nd September to 4th October, photo. (P. Mollatt, J. F. Ryan *et al.*) (plate 134).

(North America; winters southern USA, Central and South America) Following a run of six early-autumn adults in 1988 and 1991, this is the first juvenile in Britain since 1983 (excluding the first-winter in Cornwall in winter 1986). The date and locality are typical, but the species remains scarce by comparison with Semipalmated Sandpiper *C. pusilla*.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 322, 8)

Grampian Loch of Strathbeg, adult, 4th July (P. D. Bloor, J. D. Poyner, S. A. Reeves *et al.*).

Humberside South Ferriby, adult, 5th-15th August (G. P. Catley *et al.*). Tophill Low, age uncertain, 4th September (B. Beilby, F. Mollatt, T. Richardson).

Silly St Mary's, first-winter, 12th-13th, 17th-18th September (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

Shetland Pool of Virkie, adult, 31st July to 2nd August (M. Mellor *et al.*).

Sussex, East Pett Level, age uncertain, 19th September (J. Ashbee, J. A. B. Gale, D. F. G. Kennard).

1992 Cornwall Godrevy Cove, juvenile or first-winter, 27th November (P. A. Rutter).

IRELAND

Londonderry Bann Estuary, juvenile, 18th September.

Wexford Tacumshin, 22nd August.

(Northern North America; winters southern South America) An exceptional August flock in the Azores (*Ardeola* 39: 78) possibly hints at the reasons behind the preponderance of early-autumn adults in Britain compared with late-autumn juveniles. The first-noted Humberside bird, often feeding at long range, tested many birders' optics and identification abilities to the limit, and maybe led to some dubious ticks. The 1992 Cornish bird is the latest ever; there was one at Marazion, Cornwall, on 19th November 1986, but no doubt both had made earlier landfall elsewhere.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (4, 159, 3)

Devon Dawlish Warren and Bowling Green Marsh, juvenile, 30th-31st August (S. Preddy, C. R. Wills *et al.*).

Norfolk Snettisham, adult, 19th-22nd August, photo. (P. J. Heath, J. B. Kemp *et al.*), same, Titchwell, 25th (T. R. Dean, D. E. Horton *et al.*).

Shetland Scatness, juvenile, 19th-22nd September, photo. (G. J. Hinchon *et al.*).

(North America and Northeast Siberia; winters South America). The pre-1958 total is reduced by one with the deletion of the record of one allegedly shot in Norfolk in 1903 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 22; *Ibis* 136: 253). Was the Norfolk adult herein the returning bird of 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 478)? The years 1988 and 1989 were good (with 13 and 12 respectively), but three a year is about average.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (5, 15, 1)**Shetland** Scatness, adult, 13th-15th September, photo. (M. Mellor *et al.*) (plate 135).

(Northeast Siberia; winters New Guinea and Australasia) The first since 1987, the first for Shetland, typically an adult, and on the same small pool as a Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* four days later.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 141, 6)**Humberside** Blacktoft Sands, 21st June (J. T. Oakes, K. Proud).**Norfolk** Breydon, 7th-14th May (P. R. Allard, K. R. Dye *et al.*). Cley, juvenile, 8th, 10th-12th September (M. A. Golley, D. J. Holman *et al.*).**Suffolk** Minsmere, 1st-2nd June (G. R. & Mrs H. J. Welch *et al.*).**Sussex, West** Sidlesham, 1st May (A. Dare *et al.*).**Western Isles** Sollas, North Uist, 31st May (M. S. Cran, E. A. Hunter *et al.*).

(North Eurasia; winters South Asia and Australia). The spring records are now expected, but that in the Western Isles is only the second there, following one at Balranald during 27th-29th June 1983, and only the third for western Scotland. The autumn juvenile was noteworthy, but one wonders why we do not get more at that season.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (180, 68, 5)**Humberside** Spurn, 19th September (L. J. Degnan *et al.*).**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, 17th August (J. Reid *et al.*); 4th-5th October (J. Reid, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).**Shetland** Out Skerries, 17th-18th September (J. Clifton, J. & Mrs I. Miller *et al.*).**Yorkshire, North** Filey, 18th-19th September (A. Botterill, P. J. Dunn, C. C. Thomas *et al.*).**1989 Dorset** Stanpit Marsh, 25th August (*Brit. Birds* 85: 527), now considered inadequately documented.

(Northeast Europe and Northwest Asia; winters Africa). There were five in 1987 (but four of them were on Fair Isle) and 1989, so the five here equal the best since 1976. Close attention to detail in flight views is required with this species.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 158, 5)**Cheshire/Clwyd** Inner Marsh Farm, juvenile, 24th October to 3rd November, photo. (C. E. Wells *et al.*).**Gwynedd** Porthmadog, juvenile, 17th to at least 26th October, photo. (K. H. Jones, R. Jones *et al.*).

IRELAND

Down Strand Lough, adult, 24th-27th August.**Tipperary** Ashton's Callow, Little Brosna, adult, 15th-20th September.**Wexford** Tacumshin, juvenile, 25th-26th September.

(North America and Northeast Siberia; winters USA and Central America) A coincident arrival of two typically dated juveniles in the same area in Britain is a familiar pattern; indeed, two have been noted together on several past occasions. A species prone to odd good years, such as 1985 and 1987 (with 15) and 1990 (with 14), but also to regular troughs, so five is about average.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (15, 28, 2)**Silly** St Mary's, juvenile, 6th October to 6th November, photo. (per W. H. Wagstaff), presumed same, Tresco, 16th October (J. & Mrs I. Miller *et al.*).**Shetland** Foula, juvenile, 22nd September to 6th October, photo., dead 18th November (M. J. McKee, G. W. Petric, Mrs F. Ratter *et al.*).



132 & 133. Above, Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria*, Holkham, Norfolk, April 1993 (*Robin Chittenden*)



134. Above, juvenile Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*, Cornwall, September/October 1993 (*P. Hopkins*)

135. Below, adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, Shetland, 15th September 1993 (*Dennis Coult*)



(North America; winters South America) Two at opposite ends of our archipelago and at respective peak periods (September and October). This grassland species must be overlooked in less-well-watched West Coast habitats. Just five in the previous eight years shows its true vagrant status, a fact masked by the long stays of many of those which are found.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 66, 2)

Kent Dungeness, 9th May (P. G. Akers, R. J. Price *et al.*). Cliffe, 22nd July to 21st August, photo. (B. & N. P. Moore *et al.*).

1992 Sussex, East Icklesham, 4th July (*Brit. Birds* 86: 481), same, Rye Harbour LNR, 4th (D. Allen, A. Parker, M. Tieckner).

(Southeast Europe, West and East Asia; winters Africa, South Asia and Australia) A short-stayer in spring and a long-stayer in autumn. With the exception of nine in 1990, this is still a very rare wader in Britain, while its occurrences on the near-Continent and in eastern Europe continue to increase.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 192, 1)

Dorset Radipole and Lodmoor, juvenile, 11th-24th September, photo. (P. J. Barden, P. Edmonds *et al.*).

(North America; winters Southern USA, Central and South America) After a spring surge in 1992, another dismal year for this elegant shank. It will not have escaped many people's attention that there has been no acceptable record of its Greater cousin *T. melanoleuca* since the three in 1985.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 100, 2)

Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton, juvenile to first-winter, 7th October to 1994, photo. (R. Allison, J. L. F. Parslow, P. L. Varney *et al.*).

Scilly St Martin's, juvenile, 21st October, photo. (K. Hewitt).

Somerset Burnham-on-Sea, since 27th October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 484) to 11th May.

1992 Yorkshire, West New Swillington Ings, 27th May, apparently paired with Common Sandpiper *A. hypoleucos* (S. P. Singleton), presumed same, River Calder, near Castleford, 29th May to 14th June (W. J. Hesketh *et al.*), presumed returning individual, last recorded Welbeck, Southern Washlands NR, 30th June to 7th July 1991, when accompanied by Common Sandpiper and three full-grown young (*Brit. Birds* 85: 528); also Elland Gravel-pits, 31st May to 25th June 1990, when apparently paired with Common Sandpiper (*Brit. Birds* 84: 473); conceivably also same as Worsborough Reservoir, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, 29th July to 5th August 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 551).

(North America; winters USA south to Uruguay). Wintering by this species is not unusual, but the apparent pairing with a Common Sandpiper by the Yorkshire bird looks set to raise more subjects for the hybrid-wader analysts.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 251, 0)

1990 Cheshire Burton Marsh, juvenile to first-winter, 5th October (B. Rimmer *et al.*).

1991 Cambridgeshire Ely, 16th-25th September (P. Atkinson *et al.*).

1991 Clwyd Point of Air, 6th September (A. Duckers).

1991 Fife Eden Estuary, 23rd-24th September (*Brit. Birds* 86: 485), finder was R. McCurley.

1991 Sussex, West Sidlesham, 3rd June (C. M. & Mrs B. James, D. I. Smith *et al.*).

(North America; winters South America) A species prone to good and bad years, but, unless any records remain outstanding, 1993 will be the first blank year since 1960.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 61, 0)

1977 Suffolk Wherstead, 13th November, presumed same. Felixstowe, 29th, 2nd December (*Brit. Birds* 71: 506), now considered inadequately documented.

1991 Clwyd Point of Air, second-winter, 20th-22nd December (P. E. Kenyon, D. Quinn *et al.*).

(North America; winters USA to South America) A recent issue of *Dutch Birding* (12: 109-164) listed all West Palearctic records of all Nearctic gull species, with an interesting discussion and useful analyses of occurrence patterns in Europe related to migration patterns and timing in the Americas.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 27, 1)

IRELAND

Kerry Black Rock, Ballyleige, 7th-11th May.

(North America; winters South America) None in Britain, but the first, long-overdue Irish record.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 69, 1)

Cornwall Marazion, adult, 31st January to 6th February (D. S. Flumm *et al.*).

1990 Merseyside Sealforth, adults, 6th-17th April and 12th April to 1st May (*Brit. Birds* 81: 175, first individual to 19th (T. Vaughan), liner of second T. Vaughan).

1992 Devon Plymouth Sound and River Plym, adults, 14th April to 3rd May, two, 15th April to 2nd May (R. W. White *et al.*), one or other same as St John's Lake, Cornwall, 22nd April (*Brit. Birds* 86: 189) and one or other presumed returning individual last recorded Plym Estuary, 7th May 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 529).

(North America; winters USA to Mexico) Just one is well below par.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

L. a. smithsonianus (0, 14, 0)

IRELAND

1992 Sligo Sligo, first-winter, 28th-29th March.

(North America) All records to date have been in Ireland.



136. First-winter Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*, Lerwick, Shetland, December 1993 (L. Dalziel)

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides**L. g. kumlieni*/*L. g. thayeri* (0, 16, 2)

Individuals showing the characters of one or other of the western races *L. g. kumlieni* or *L. g. thayeri* were noted as follows:

Devon Plymouth area, adult, 26th January to 24th February (P. J. Cruttenden *et al.*).

Grampian Banff, adult, at least 23rd March (G. & R. P. Clay, J. C. Lowen), presumed returning 1991 individual (*Brit. Birds* 86: 489), also in Highland.

Highland Inverness, adult, 27th February (S. J. Aspinall, C. J. McNerny, J. F. McConnell), presumed same as 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 489).

Shetland Scatness, adult ♀, moribund, 15th January, photo. (H. R. Harrop, M. Heubeck, M. Mellor), now at Royal Scottish Museum.

1979 Cornwall Penzance, adult, 3rd-15th March, photo. (W. R. Hirst, L. P. Williams).

1990 Grampian Banff Bay and Harbour, adult, 5th January to 26th March (P. D. Bloor, R. Maver, R. Proctor *et al.* per A. Webb), presumed same as 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 466).

(Canada; winters North America) The 1979 Cornish record becomes the first to be accepted for Britain. The taxonomy of this group remains vexed and apparently open to question, but with a generally agreed clinal variation in plumage characteristics it becomes difficult if not impossible to assign any one individual to any given population. Adults are the easiest to identify, but several birds in younger plumages are under consideration and, logically, first-winters should outnumber adults by a considerable margin, as with nominate Icelanders.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 53, 7)

Tayside Tay Estuary, off Monifieth, adult, 31st December (M. S. Scott).

Grampian Fraserburgh, adult, 17th-26th January, photo. (the late A. G. Clarke, P. S. Crockett *et al.*); adult, 23rd-26th January (the late A. G. Clarke, P. S. Crockett, A. W. Thorpe *et al.*); adult, 24th-30th January (the late A. G. Clarke, P. S. Crockett, R. Noble-Nesbitt *et al.*).

Shetland Skaw, Unst, adult, 21st September to 6th October, photo. (M. J. McLeod, M. G. Pennington *et al.*) (plate 137).

Tyne & Wear North Shields, adult, 30th January (K. W. & L. Regan).

Western Isles Stornoway, adult, 31st January to 3rd February, photo. (P. Cunningham, R. D. Wemyss *et al.*).



137. Adult Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, Skaw, Unst, Shetland, September 1993 (*L. Dalziel*)

(Northeast Siberia and Canada) The unprecedented arrival of five, including the first 'flock' in Grampian, during a prolonged period of northwesterly gales in January 1993, along with exceptional numbers of Iceland Gulls *L. glaucoides*, including several of the races *L. g. kamlieni/thayeri*, was one of the highlights of the year. There were also records in Finland and Sweden in the same period. Also noteworthy is the recent increase in autumn records, whereas there were only three at that season prior to 1988.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (76, 37, 3)

Shetland Collafirth, first-winter, 12th December (K. Lund, E. Mowat, J. Swale), probably same, Lerwick, 14th-29th, photo. (H. R. Harrop, M. Mellor *et al.*) (plate 136). Whalsay, first-winter, 13th December (J. L. Irvine, Dr B. Marshall).

Western Isles Balranald, North Uist, adult, 29th December, photo. (F. J. Dix, C. O'Nians).

(Arctic) With a whole seal (Phocidae) on offer, the Western Isles adult might have been expected to stay longer, but maybe there was a more tasty corpse a few kilometres farther south. Also, a first-winter found dead at St Brelade, Jersey, Channel Islands, on 3rd January 1993. An excellent paper on this species, with stunning colour photographs, appeared in the ABA's journal, *Birding* (25: 331-338).

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (52, 189, 4)

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, 5th October (D. N. Smith).

Glamorgan, West Penrice, Hangman's Corner and Knelston, 1th-5th July, photo. (D. C. Bolt, W. Howard, O. J. Leyshon *et al.*).

Norfolk Waxham, 26th June (J. R. Binstead, J. R. Hopkins).

1974 Suffolk Sizewell, 10th May (*Brit. Birds* 68: 321), now considered inadequately documented.

IRELAND

Cork Ballycotton, 29th April.

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colony in Denmark; European population winters Africa) A two-day stay is one day longer than usual for this rather elusive species, which remains high in the rejection ratings. Last year's comment regarding Orkney was incorrect: the first there was in 1913.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 197, 4)

Derbyshire Willington, 11th May (R. W. Key, S. P. Warford *et al.*), probably same as Warwickshire, Nottinghamshire.

Humberside Spurn, 29th July (J. Cudworth), presumed same as Norfolk.

Norfolk Hickling and Breydon, 13th-18th, 22nd July, photo. (J. S. Hampshire, R. Handley, I. & S. Smith *et al.*). Bacton, 28th July (M. Fiszor), presumed same, Blakeney Point, 29th (J. M. & P. J. Dolton), Brancaster, 29th (V. Eve *et al.*), and in Humberside, Sheringham, 22nd August (M. T. Elliott, M. P. Lee, M. Young-Powell *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Lound, 12th May, photo. (P. Palmer *et al.*), probably same as Derbyshire.

Warwickshire Dosthill Lake, 10th May (J. A. Astbury), probably same as Derbyshire.

1992 Leicestershire Thornton Reservoir, 20th June (*Brit. Birds* 86: 539), now considered acceptable (A. D. Smith), probably same as Staffordshire.

1992 Staffordshire Belvide Reservoir, 21st June (M. Fox, M. W. Russon *et al.*), probably same as Leicestershire above.

(Almost cosmopolitan except South America, everywhere local; European populations winter in Africa) Tracking these magnificent beasts around the country is not easy, but it could be that only three were involved in 1993. The statistics may overstate the number of individuals which have occurred in the past.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* (0, 4, 0)

Borders St Abb's Head, 16th May (M. Collinson, J. F. McConnell, R. D. Murray), presumed same as Northumberland.

Lincolnshire Saltfleetby. ♀, 20th June, photo., mating with colour-ringed Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis* (G. P. Catley *et al.*).

Norfolk Scolt Head, 8th-15th, 21st July (D. J. Holman *et al.*); same, Thornham, 11th (per G. E. Dunmore). Sheringham, 22nd August (K. B. Shepherd, S. C. Votier, M. C. Young-Powell *et al.*).

Northumberland Farne Islands, ♀, intermittently, 3rd May to 8th August, presumed returning 1992 individual, paired with same Sandwich Tern as 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 492), mating observed 31st May (per B. N. Rossiter).

(North and East Africa, east to Australia; winter quarters uncertain) The Farnes bird was very mobile in 1993, appearing in Borders, Northumberland, Humberside (Easington: details not yet received) and Lincolnshire. In each locality, apart from Borders, she was noted as being paired with a colour-ringed Sandwich Tern, ringed on the Farnes in 1986. Without full dates from the Farnes and Humberside, it is impossible to say at this time whether the July one in Norfolk was a different individual.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0, 21, 0)

IRELAND

Wexford Wexford Harbour, 17th March to 2nd April.

1992 Wexford Wexford Harbour, adult, 4th-26th September.

(North America: winters USA and Mexico) An almost exclusively Irish rarity in recent years; presumably, the same individual recorded at the same locality in 1987/88.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* (3, 13, 3)

Highland Eigg, 21st July (J. Chester).

Northamptonshire Earl's Barton Gravel-pits, 29th May (A. P. Borley, P. A. Britten, S. G. D. Cook *et al.*).

Sussex, East Rye, 16th-17th May, photo. (N. & Mrs C. Winterman, Dr B. J. Yates *et al.*) (plates 138 & 139).

1992 Humberside Flamborough Head, 18th August (A. M. Allport), presumed same as Northumberland below.

1992 Northumberland Coquet Island, 14th August, photo. (H. Paget-Wilkes, D. C. Richardson).

(Caribbean, West Africa, Red Sea, Indian and Pacific Oceans) The two 1992 records, presumed to be of the same individual, continue the unbroken run since 1988, but just how many individuals are being recorded is another matter. Two were together in the Netherlands and Belgium in July 1989, when one was in Northumberland, so at least three were on the North Sea coasts at that time, but it must be just a possibility that most of the records since 1988 refer to only three or four very mobile individuals. The Northamptonshire record was an excellent inland find, recalling that at Rutland Water in June 1984, and Northamptonshire becomes the first inland county to have recorded both Sooty *S. fuscata* and Bridled Terns.

The Committee also spent many hours studying a record of a tern, on the Isle of May, Fife, on 14th July 1989, but was unable to arrive at a firm conclusion as to which of these two species it belonged.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* (20, 86, 2)

Essex Abberton Reservoir, 3rd-6th July, photo. (S. Grimwade, B. Smith, J. Summers *et al.*).

Gwynedd Llyn Traffwll, Anglesey, 19th June, same, Cemlyn Bay, 20th-23rd, photo. (P. E. Kenyon, D. Quinn *et al.*).

1991 Leicestershire/Northamptonshire Stanford Reservoir, first-winter, 22nd October (J. M. & K. A. Wilson).

(South Eurasia, Africa and Australia; European birds winter in Africa) An erratic vagrant: none in 1990, only the one here in 1991, none in 1992 and two in 1993. Good years were 1987 (with nine) and 1988 (with ten). With large numbers now wintering in southern France, and two wintering in the Netherlands in 1991/92, could we yet see one in late autumn hang on in a mild winter?

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 589, 15)

Berkshire Theale, 21st May (R. Crawford, B. Uttley *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire Purl's Bridge, 22nd-26th June, photo. (C. A. E. Kirtland, C., M. & P. Smout *et al.*), presumed same as Lincolnshire.

Cheshire Neumann's Flash, Pickmere and Budworth Mere, juvenile, 7th-10th September (J. Gregory, P. E. Kenyon, D. M. Walters *et al.*).



Fig. 2. White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Marton Mere, Lancashire, 26th June 1993 (David Quinn)



138 & 139. Above, Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*, East Sussex, May 1993 (Christine & Norman Winterman)
140. Below, first-summer male Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Fleet Pond, Hampshire, May 1993
 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



Cheshire/Clwyd Inner Marsh Farm, adult, 20th-21st July (N. Friswell, C. Wells).

Clwyd See Cheshire/Clwyd above.

Cornwall Hayle, juvenile, 9th September (J. H. Hawkey).

Cornwall/Devon Tamar Lakes, 10th-12th May (P. F. & Mrs J. Goodfellow, F. H. C. Kendal, R. Pettitt *et al.*).

Devon See Cornwall/Devon above.

Grampian Loch Spynie, 15th May (C. A. Gervaise, R. Proctor *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, 22nd May (P. G. Akers, R. J. Price *et al.*).

Lancashire Marton Mere, second-summer, 25th-26th June (A. Leeming, D. McGrath, D. Quinn *et al.*) (fig. 2, on page 534).

Lincolnshire Saltfleetby, 21st June, photo. (W. Gillat, J. T. Harriman), presumed same as Cambridgeshire.

Merseyside Seaforth, juvenile to first-winter, 1st-3rd September, photo.; juvenile, 11th-14th, photo. (G. Thomas, S. J. White *et al.*).

Yorkshire, West Anglers Country Park, Wakefield, juvenile, 13th September (P. L. Mountain, J. M. Turton); same, New Swillington Lugs, 13th (per P. J. Dunn).

1990 Kent Dartford, juvenile, 4th-5th September (B. E. Wright *et al.*), presumed same as Essex (*Brit. Birds* 84: 477).

1992 Berkshire Theale, adult, 18th May (T. Marlow, B. Uttley); second-summer, 18th May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 193), 19th (B. Uttley *et al.*); adult, 10th-11th August (D. H. Russell *et al.*).

1992 Cleveland Sealing Dam, juvenile, 19th August (I. Boustead, D. Page *et al.*).

1992 Hampshire Alresford Pond, adult, 3rd September (G. Thompson). Keyhaven, juvenile, 6th September (M. C. & P. Combridge).

1992 Staffordshire Blithfield Reservoir, adult, 11th September (P. A. J. Newman, S. Wood *et al.*).

1992 Tayside Forfar Loch, 23rd-27th May (G. Addison, M. S. Scott *et al.*).

IRELAND

Down Belfast Harbour Pools, adult, 1st September.

Fermanagh Lough Melvin, adult, 28th July.

(Southeast Europe, Asia and Africa; European birds winter Africa) The year 1992 moves farther in front, with 49 records, so 15 seems poor by comparison, but is about average.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (2, 26, 1)

Lothian Musselburgh, 27th March (S. W. Anderson, P. Bould, B. A. Hickman).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Another live bird, but it appeared to be in less-than-perfect health. The ratio of corpses to live birds suggests that these auks come in close only when they are 'on the way out'.

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* (2, 3, 0)

1973 Cornwall Land's End, 5th October (*Brit. Birds* 67: 328, 352-354), now considered inadequately documented.

1975 Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 25th October (*Brit. Birds* 70: 448), now considered inadequately documented.

1978 Cornwall St Ives, 18th-19th May (*Brit. Birds* 72: 528) now considered inadequately documented.

(Southern Asia from Urals to Japan; winters India, Southeast Asia) The five records which remain extant are of specimens obtained in North Yorkshire in 1889 and Norfolk in 1946 and field identifications in Scilly in 1960, on Fair Isle, Shetland, in 1974 and at Spurn, Humberside, in 1975.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (6, 30, 1)

Scilly St Martin's, probably first-summer, 11th March to 1st April (V. Jackson, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) Given a breath of warm air from the south, March arrival seems now to be a good possibility.

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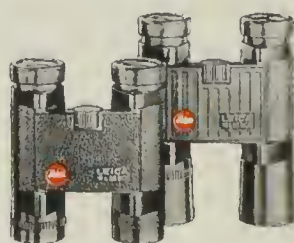
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D123



1141 & 142. Above, Paddyfield Warblers *Acrocephalus agricola*: left, first-winter, Flamborough Head, Humberside, 27th September 1992 (*P. A. Lassey*); right, La Claire Marc, Guernsey, Channel Islands, 19th August 1993 (*P. K. Veron*)

143. Below, Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*, Blakeney Point, Norfolk, September 1993 (*R. C. Wilson*)



Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (22, 35, 0).

IRELAND

1989 Donegal Tory Island, 6th October.

(North and Central America; winters south to Argentina) This late record takes the 1989 total to four.

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (64, 20, 0)**1985 Orkney** See 1986 below.**1986 Orkney** Papa Westray, 24th June to 11th July, dead 12th (*Brit. Birds* 86: 496), was in 1985.

(South Europe, Russia, West Asia and Northwest Africa; winters Africa) Contrary to last year's statement, this was Orkney's fifth.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (many, 106, 6)**Highland** Moss of Wester, immature, 18th to at least 31st January, photo. (H. Clark, J. L. Ryrice, W. Watt *et al.*). Near Halkirk, 5th September (A. & Mrs J. Macintosh).**Orkney** Rousay, ♀, probably juvenile, 22nd-23rd July, photo. (S. Scott *et al.*).**Shetland** Eshaness, ♀, 29th April (D. Coutts), presumed same, Ronas Hill, 3rd May (J. N. Dymond), Skerries, 20th June (E. Tait), Fetlar, 18th September (B. Thomason) (all details per D. Suddaby), presumed one or other of 1992 individuals (*Brit. Birds* 86: 496).**Western Isles** Hirta, St Kilda, ♂, probably first-year, 11th April (D. Clark, T. J. Dix, J. Vaughan). Balranald, North Uist, ♀, 14th, 18th June (D. & M. Washington *et al.*), presumed same, Bornish, South Uist, 16th-18th April, 23rd June to July, Drimsdale, South Uist, 2nd August (per T. J. Dix).**1992 Western Isles** Balranald, North Uist, ♂, 30th-31st May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 496) was ♀.

IRELAND

Donegal Aranmore Island, 24th June.**1992 Mayo** Achill Island, 19th February.**1986 Donegal** Tory Island, three days in November.

(Circumpolar Arctic; disperses south in some winters) Though the Fetlar group seems now to be on the verge of extinction, the Western Isles may, just possibly, be the next focus of attention for this beautiful creature.

In the Channel Islands, a male was on Alderney during 5th-16th April and at three localities on Guernsey during 20th-21st, and 1992 reports have now been received of a female or immature in the Castel area of Guernsey from 31st May to 1st June, after brief sightings at Chouet on 14th April, on Herm on 16th and at Les Hanois and Pleinmont on 20th May. All present a somewhat puzzling series of occurrences so far south and at such a season. Another intriguing record, although not strictly British, was of one which boarded a ship in the North Atlantic at 46° 30' N 32° 30' W, 680 nautical miles east of Newfoundland, on 26th February 1992 and eventually departed in the direction of Folkestone, Kent, in Sea area Dover, on 29th, never to be seen again.

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* (0, 0, 1)**Norfolk** Cley, 30th May, photo. (A. M. Brown, S. J. M. Gantlett *et al.*) (plates 144 & 145).(Himalayas east to Siberia and Japan; winters Indonesia south to Australia) This species occurs in the Seychelles in autumn, so perhaps this bird strayed to Africa in autumn and came north with our Common Swifts *A. apus*. This record closely parallels that of one caught on an oil-platform 45 km off Norfolk on 19th June 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 43-46; *Ibis* 134: 212) and spring records of White-throated Needletail Swifts *Hirundapus caudacutus*.



144 & 145. Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*, Cley, Norfolk, 30th May 1993 (R. C. Wilson)



Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (150, 326, 19)

Avon Aust Cliff, 11th April (S. Hale).

Cheshire Sandbach, 9th October (P. Lunt, D. Norbury, P. Swallow).

Cornwall Near Polzeath, 26th March (G. J. Conway, R. L. Smith). Stithians Reservoir, 15th October (D. N. Arnold, J. D. McMillan).

Devon Torcross, 8th April (D. Cope, A. D. Smith).

Dyfed Borth, 9th April (H. W. Roderick, R. Thomas, B. G. Twigg).

Essex Fingringhoe Wick, 13th June (A. Kettle, D. Leach, T. Mole *et al.*). Bradwell, adult, recently dead, 19th September, photo. (G. R. Ekins).

Humberside Goxhill, South Humberside, 11th June (D. L. Kirby).

Kent Worth, 16th April (R. Dunwoody). Reculver, two, 23rd-26th April (D. M. Allan, D. C. Gilbert, C. H. Hindle *et al.*); another, 2nd May (B. Matlock).

Norfolk Beeston and Sheringham area, 22nd April, photo. (G. Herriven, D. J. Holman *et al.*).

Northamptonshire Ditchford Gravel-pit, 21st March (N. M. Butler). Ravensthorpe Reservoir, 15th May (R. F. Burrows).

Strathclyde Cambeltown, Kintyre, 15th April (M. Campbell, D. Garratt *et al.*).

Sussex, West Sompting, 1st August (P. M. Brayshaw).

Yorkshire, South Denaby Ings, 21st March (T. Feltham).

At sea Irish Sea, 53° 55' N 03° 34' W, 30th May (G. Brown).

1978 Leicestershire Rutland Water, 8th-10th August (*Brit. Birds* 72: 546), now accepted (T. P. Appleton, M. J. Pearce *et al.*).

1992 Kent Foreness, 3rd October (S. D. W. Mount).

1992 Lancashire Caton, 25th May (D. Barber, P. J. Marsh).

1992 Norfolk Cley and other north-coast localities, 24th April (M. A. Golley, A. N. Mellor *et al.*).

1992 Strathclyde Balgray Reservoir, 2nd May (J. Coyle, V. Wilson).

1992 Wight, Isle of Seaview, 25th May (D. G. H. Mills).

IRELAND

1986 Cork Glandore, 20th May.

(South Eurasia, Northwest and East Africa; winters Africa) An average year, but only three in March.



146 & 147. Above, male Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*, Llanarmon-yn-Ial, Clwyd, June 1992 (top, L. W. Hawkins; centre, Brian Rimmer)

148 & 149. Below, first-winter male Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi*, Icklesham, East Sussex, 17th October 1990 (J. P. Moulton)



Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0, 7, 1)

1992 Humberside Flamborough Head, 19th-21st July (D. Beaumont, D. R. Middleton, B. Richards *et al.*).

IRELAND

Dublin Howth Head, 9th August, found dead later the same day.

(Northwest Africa and Iberia to south Iran; winters Africa) The Committee is of the view that, in distinguishing this species from pale, aberrant Common Swifts *A. apus*, overreliance on reputed differences in structure and flight can be risky. An accurate account of plumage characters, taking into consideration light conditions at the time, is essential. A 1993 record from Norfolk remains under consideration. The Irish record is the first there, but an earlier one is still under assessment.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 87, 1)

Cleveland South Gare, adult, 11th September, video-recorded (P. A. Doherty).

1991 Suffolk Orfordness, juvenile, 8th-12th September (*Brit. Birds* 86: 500), 13th (per P. W. Murphy).

(South and East Europe, West Asia and Northwest Africa; winters Africa) A chance fly-by captured on video-tape by one of our leading photographers.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (40, 374, 18)

Devon Lundy, 2nd-3rd May (R. Bower, L. Lock, R. W. White *et al.*).

Dorset Portland, 13th May (M. Cade *et al.*).

Fife Isle of May, trapped 4th June, photo. (J. Conner, L. Swift).

Kent Dungeness, 29th May, photo. (G. J. A. Burton, B. A. Ryan *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 24th April (P. J. Donnelly *et al.*) (fig. 3).

Scilly Treseo, 12th May (G. M. Haig). St Mary's, 3rd October (K. C. Osborne *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 3rd-10th May (R. Jameson, P. A. Jenks, A. J. Leitch *et al.*). Bannaminn, West Burra, 26th-27th May (M. Mellor *et al.*). Grutness, 28th May (Dr C. F. Mackenzie). Noss, 29th May (W. E. Oddie). Fetlar, 6th June (B. H. Thomason *et al.*); 19th September (B. H. Thomason).

Somerset Berrow, 26th-27th April (B. Rabbitts, A. M. & B. E. Slade *et al.*).

1991 Scilly St Agnes, 5th October (P. A. Dukes).

IRELAND

Cork Ballycotton, 25th-26th April. Dursey Island, 1st-2nd May; 1st-16th June. Cape Clear Island, 5th-6th June.

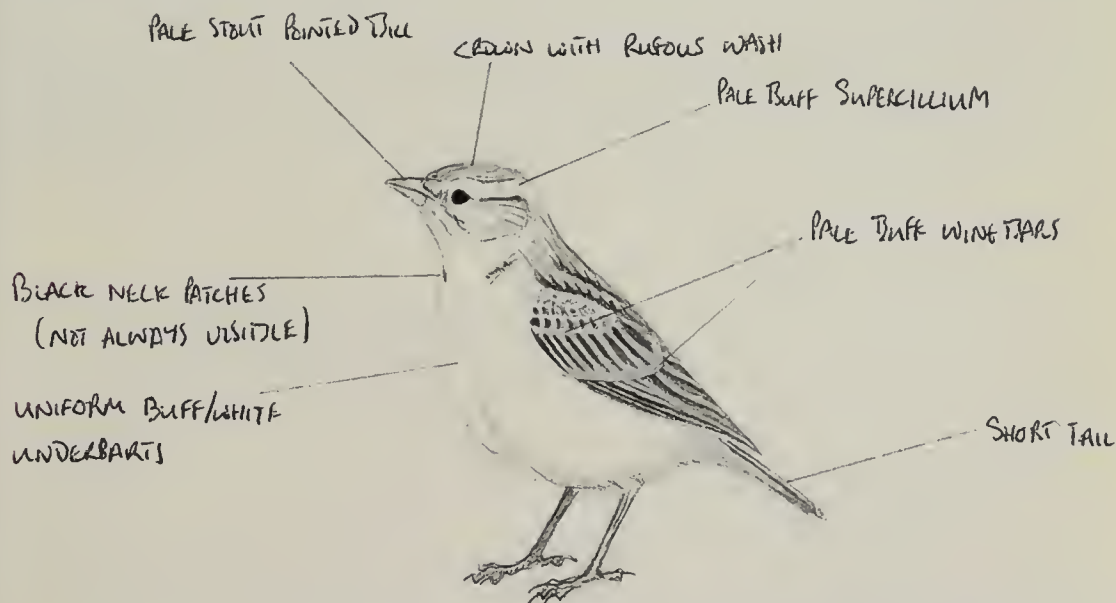


Fig. 3. Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 24th April 1993 (P. J. Donnelly)

1992 Wexford Great Saltee, 24th May.

(South Eurasia; winters North Africa) Four June records—two in Ireland and two in Scotland—are somewhat out of the ordinary.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 237, 5)

Essex East Tilbury, 26th September (D. Jobbins, A. J. Kane, C. Rose).

Kent St Margaret's, 5th June, photo. (A. R. Lawson, L. Pritchard, B. E. Wright *et al.*). Isle of Grain, 25th September (K. J. Thornton).

Orkney Near Dounby, Loch of Harray, 16th June (R. G. Adam).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 2nd May (D. & J. F. Cooper).

1992 Humberside Spurn, 5th May (M. G. Oxlade). Flamborough Head, 28th May, photo. (M. S. Chapman, D. Marsden, J. Martin *et al.*).

(South and East Eurasia and Africa; winters Africa) An average year and no late-autumn occurrences. The 1992 acceptances take that year's total to 13.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 148, 31)

Cornwall Polgigga, 18th-19th October (Dr A. M. Hanby *et al.*). St Levan, 18th-19th October (S. M. Lister, M. C. Hall).

Humberside Flamborough Head, 14th October (M. R. Miles, R. Taylor); 23rd-24th October, trapped 23rd, photo. (D. I. M. Wallace *et al.*).

Kent Sandwich Bay, 6th October (T. Bagworth, C. Solly).

Lothian Barns Ness, 3rd October (A. Brown).

Norfolk Holkham Meals, 24th October to 2nd November, photo. (M. Cocker, D. J. Holman, J. B. Kemp *et al.*).

Orkney Stronsay, 4th-5th October (M. Baynes, M. Doughty, J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway).

Scilly Treco, 16th October (R. J. Hathway, J. F. Ryan *et al.*). St Agnes, 25th October, probably since 23rd (C. Bradshaw, J. Gilbody *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 29th September to 3rd October, possibly to 6th (S. J. M. Gantlett, D. M. Harris *et al.*); three, 4th October (S. Holloway); 10th-11th October (P. V. Harvey, A. J. Leitch *et al.*). Exnaboe, 29th September (J. Clifton, D. Thymes). Norwick, Unst, two, 30th September, one to 3rd October (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Voe, 30th September to 4th October (M. S. Chapman, R. Proctor *et al.*). Whalsay, 1st October (A. M. Stoddart); 24th October (Dr C. F. Mackenzie). Scatness, 2nd October (G. J. Hinchon, T. Lawrence). Culswick, 2nd October (Dr C. F. Mackenzie), presumed same, 5th (C. D. R. Heard). Stove, Sandwick, 5th October (T. M. Brereton, D. M. Pullan *et al.*). Fetlar, 6th October (R. H. Thomason). Noss Hill, near Spiggie, 6th October (G. J. Fitchett). Helendale, Lerwick, 8th-9th October (T. P. Drew *et al.*). Out Skerries, 9th-10th October (J. M. & T. P. Drew, P. M. Ellis *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 1st October (P. J. Dunn, D. A. Rushforth); 14th-16th October (L. Gillard, A. Norris *et al.*).

1991 Kent Locality in north, taken into care injured sometime prior to October, still in care January 1993, photo. (M. J. Orchard, Mrs R. Woolmer *et al.*).

1992 Norfolk Holkham Meals, 5th-10th October (*Brit. Birds* 86: 504), first seen 4th (J. A. White). Stiffkey, 7th-12th October (D. J. Holman, R. G. Millington *et al.*).

IRELAND

Cork Cape Clear Island, 17th October.

(Northeast Russia to Central and East Asia; winters southern Asia) The flood of occurrences in Shetland rivals that of 1990. Elsewhere, the spread was typical of events in recent years. The saga of the Kent bird found in 1991 is astonishing.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (13, 29, 2)

Grampian St Fergus, 11th October (P. Doyle).

Shetland Foula, 27th-29th September, photo. (J. M. & T. P. Drew, M. J. McKee, D. J. Rigby).

(Northeast Russia, Central and East Asia; winters Southeast Asia) Two typical records, though this is usually a Fair Isle speciality.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (30, 265, 8)**Devon** Bolberry Down, 2nd-3rd October (P. H. Aley, C. J. Cox, R. W. White *et al.*).**Essex** Bradwell-on-Sea, 17th September (B. O'Dowd); 5th October (J. C. Sutherby).**Greater London** Rainham Marsh, 19th September (M. K. Dennis).**Humberside** Spurn, 18th-19th September (J. Hewitt *et al.*).**Scilly** St Mary's, at least one, 10th October (S. Breasley, D. M. Lammacraft, A. F. Mears *et al.*).**Shetland** Fair Isle, 17th September (K. Pellow, A. Slack, J. R. Todd *et al.*); 29th, presumed same to 3rd October (T. R. Cleeves, R. E. Harbird *et al.*).**1992 Humberside** Flamborough Head, 25th May (J. C. Lamplough, P. A. Lassey, M. Newsome).**1992 Norfolk** Blakeney Point, 26th-28th May, two, 27th-28th (*Brit. Birds* 86: 505), third individual, 25th (S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*), presumed same, 28th (S. Betts, A. Chamberlain, J. Eaton *et al.*).**1992 Northumberland** Newbiggin, 17th September (A. T. Forster).**1992 Western Isles** Hirta, St Kilda, 18th July (J. Vaughan *et al.*).

(Arctic Eurasia; winters India and Africa) It is gratifying to note that some observers are now making real efforts to describe the voice of this species, especially when seeking to establish fly-over records. Nevertheless, previous experience remains an important factor.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava**M. f. feldegg* (0, 10, 0)

The following records, previously accepted as showing the characters of the black-headed Southwest Asian and Southeast European race *M. f. feldegg*, are now considered unacceptable, mostly owing to possible confusion with *M. f. thunbergi*:

1964 Cornwall Marazion, ♂, 29th June (*Brit. Birds* 58: 368).**1969 Shetland** Out Skerries, ♂, 8th-11th May, photo. (*Brit. Birds* 63: 288).**1974 Shetland** Fair Isle, ♂, 3rd-8th May (*Brit. Birds* 68: 329).**1976 Gwynedd** Bardsey, ♂, 8th May (*Brit. Birds* 70: 439).**1978 Cornwall** Polzeath, ♂, 5th June (*Brit. Birds* 72: 532).

(Balkans east to Afghanistan and Iran; winters Northwestern India and East Africa) The three pre-1958 records (Dumfries & Galloway, 1925; Shetland, 1936; and Lothian, 1952) have also been reviewed by the BOU Records Committee and are now deemed unacceptable (*Ibis* 135: 496). The situation concerning four other records (1958, 1960, 1974 and 1978) remains to be clarified.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 59, 5)**Hampshire** Fleet Pond, first-summer ♂, 15th-16th May, photo. (J. N. Dixon *et al.*) (plate 140). Farlington Marshes, first-winter, 30th August to 2nd September (K. Betton, A. J. B. Lester, G. Thompson *et al.*).**Scilly** Treseo, juvenile, 19th-21st August (R. Gleadle, R. J. Hathway, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).**Shetland** Fair Isle, first-winter, 27th-31st August (I. Barton, P. A. Jenks, K. Rosewarne *et al.*); first-winter, 18th-26th September (M. R. Lawn, A. J. Leitch, P. A. Jenks *et al.*).

(Northeast and East Russia, West Siberia, West and Central Asia; winters Southern and Southeast Asia) The Hampshire record in spring matches that of a first-summer male in Leicestershire on 18th May 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 536).



150 & 151. Red-flanked Bluetails *Tarsiger cyanurus*: above, Winspit, Dorset, October 1993 (*Robin Chittenden*); below, first-winter, Fair Isle, Shetland, 16th September 1993 (*Dennis Coultts*)

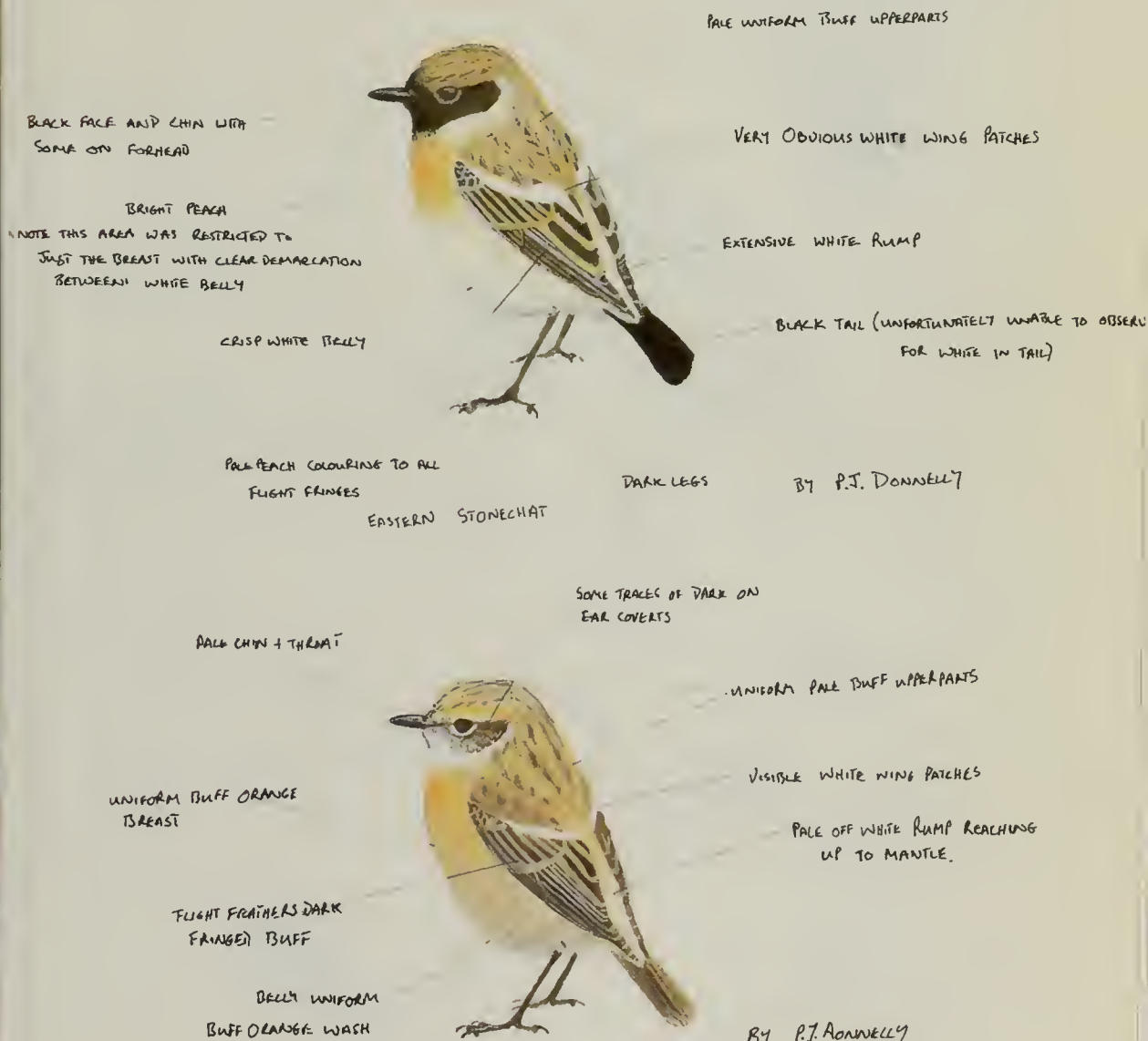


Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* (0, 2, 0)**1982 Cornwall** Saltash, 30th August (E. Griffiths).**1988 Essex** Hamford Water, 17th-23rd May, photo. (J. Backhouse, Dr S. Cox, J. Miller).

(Southern North America and Central America) A somewhat dishevelled individual on Blakeney Point, Norfolk, on 20th-28th August 1971 is considered to have been a probable escape from captivity, whilst one well photographed on Worms Head, Gower, West Glamorgan, from 24th July to 11th August 1978 is considered unlikely to have been a genuine vagrant and is therefore afforded category D status (*Ibis* 135: 496).

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* (29, 8, 1)**Devon** Lundy, 8th May (J. K. Allen, K. Wimbush *et al.*).

(Mountains in Iberia and Northwest Africa, the Alps east to Japan; winters in lower valleys) Warm easterly weather at the time meant that this came as no great surprise; another good possibility would have been a Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*.



Figs. 4 & 5. Common Stonechats *Saxicola torquata* of eastern race *stegnegeri/maura*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney above, male, 4th October 1993; below, female or first-winter, 23rd October 1993 (P. J. Donnelly)

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 97, 5)

Fife Isle of May, first-summer, trapped 27th May, photo. (J. J. Sweeney *et al.*); first-summer, 27th-28th May, trapped 27th, photo. (J. Calladine, J. J. Sweeney *et al.*).

Lancashire Heysham, trapped 25th September, photo. (P. J. Marsh *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, trapped 21st May (P. J. Donnelly, M. Gray, N. Ward *et al.*).

Shetland Helendale, Lerwick, in song, 20th May (A. J. McCall *et al.*).

1992 Shetland Fair Isle, 18th-20th September (*Brit. Birds* 86: 507), observers included H. R. Harrop.

(Scandinavia, East Europe and West Asia; winters Africa) First-summer birds, still short of migratory experience, seem particularly vulnerable to easterly winds on their way back to Scandinavia in spring. Two in a day on the Isle of May emulates Fair Isle. Contrary to last year's statement, the two on Orkney in 1992 were the third and fourth there.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (3, 8, 2)

Dorset Winspit, probably first-winter, 30th October to 8th November, photo. (M. & T. Langman, N. G. Morris *et al.*) (fig. 6, plate 150).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped 16th September, photo. (H. J. Burgess, M. R. Lawn, A. J. Leitch *et al.*) (plate 151).

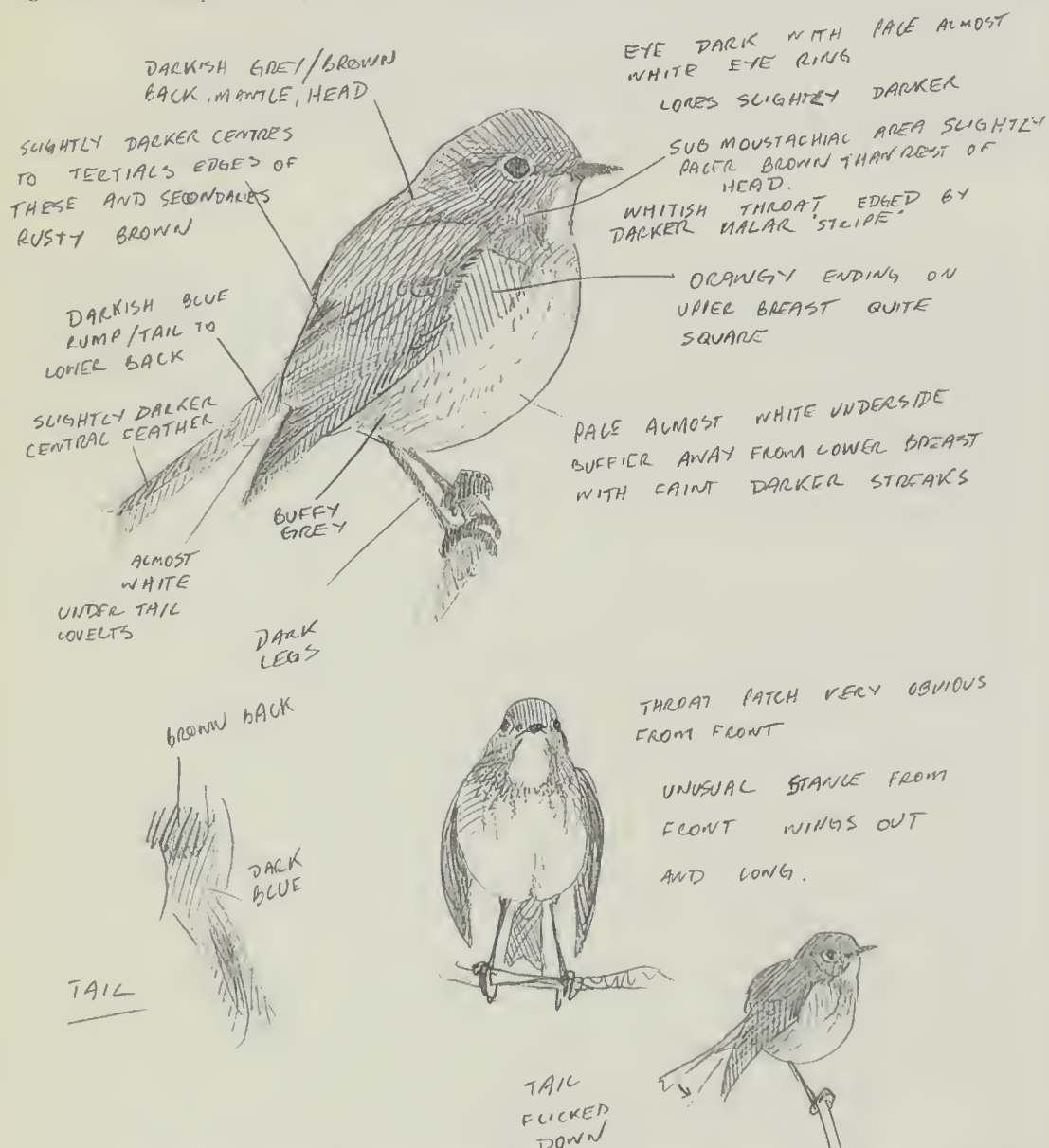


Fig. 6. Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, Winspit, Dorset, October 1993 (Mike Langman)

(Northeast Europe across Asia to Japan; winters Southeast Asia) At last, the monopoly of the North has been broken, but, if other southern records follow, will the escape bugbear rear its ugly head? A female or immature was reported from Ouessant, Finistère, France, on 27th October (*Brit. Birds* 87: 321), a great deal closer to Dorset than is Fair Isle.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

S. t. maura/*S. t. stejnegeri* (1, 191, 17)

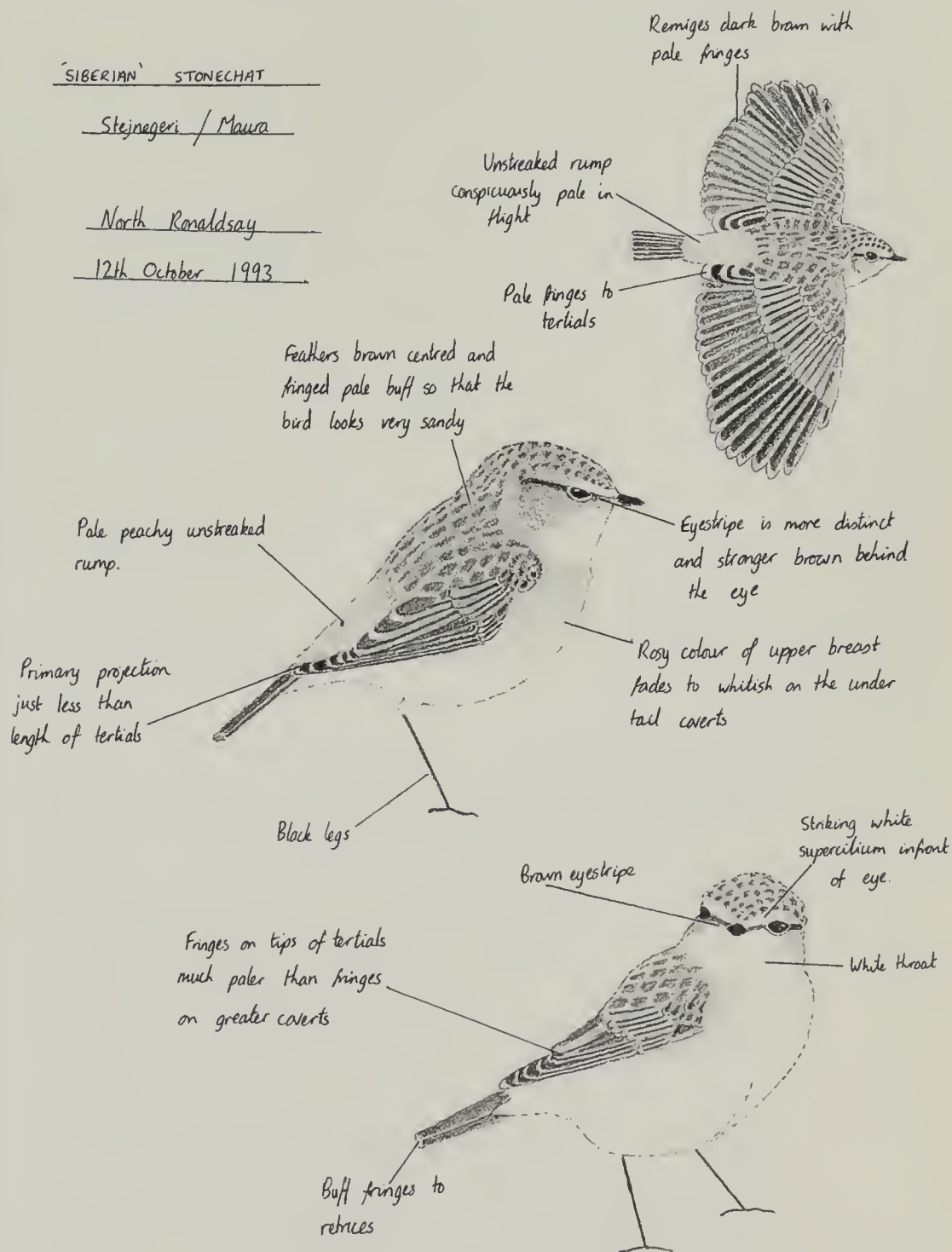


Fig. 7. Female or first-winter Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* of eastern race *stejnegeri/maura*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 12th October 1993 (Jane Reid)



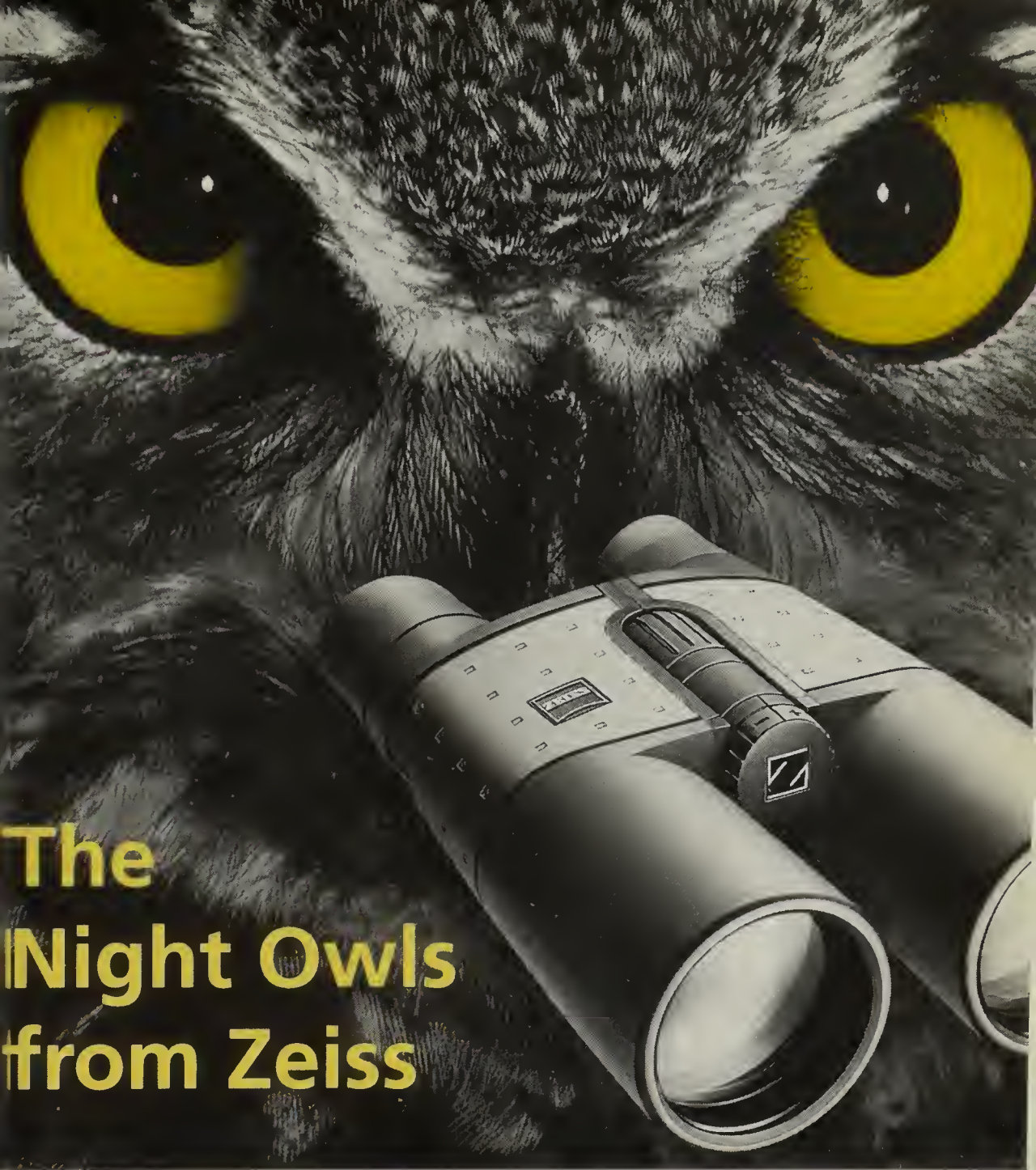
152 & 153. Above, female or first-winter Common Stonechat *Savicola torquata*, of race *stegnegeri/maura* (dark end of range of variation). Spurn, Humberside, 31st October 1993 (C. Massingham)



154. Above, first-winter male Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*, Stillkey, Norfolk, October 1993 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)

155. Below, female Desert Wheatear *O. deserti*, Heacham, Norfolk, 27th November 1993 (Neil Murphy)





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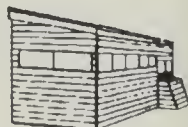
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Individuals showing the characters of one or other of the eastern races *S. t. maura* or *stejnegeri* were recorded as follows:

Humberside Spurn, ♀ or first-winter, 14th-17th September (M. L. Denton, J. McLoughlin *et al.*); ♀ or first-winter, 14th October (J. Cudworth, B. Fendley); presumed same, Kilnsea, 15th-19th (L. J. Degnan *et al.*); ♀ or first-winter, 24th-31st October, trapped 31st, photo. (T. Collins, L. J. Degnan, N. P. Whitehouse *et al.*) (plates 152 & 153).

Kent Dungeness, ♀ or first-winter, 1st November (D. Okines, D. Walker).

Norfolk Cley, ♀ or first-winter, 19th-22nd October (P. Ball, K. W. Lodge, D. H. Sutton).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♂, 4th October (P. J. Donnelly) (fig. 4, on page 545); ♀ or first-winter, 8th (J. Reid, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*); ♀ or first-winter, 12th (J. Reid) (fig. 7, on page 547); ♀ or first-winter, 23rd (P. J. Donnelly, M. Gray, S. D. Stansfield) (fig. 5, on page 545). South Ronaldsay, first-winter ♂, 9th October (E. R. Meek, E. J. & S. J. Williams).

Shetland Whalsay, ♀ or first-winter, 25th September (J. L. Irvine, Dr B. Marshall, A. M. Stoddart). Toab, ♀ or first-winter, 25th September (D. Rhymes). Fair Isle, ♂, age uncertain, 29th September to at least 8th October (D. Suddaby *et al.*); ♂, age uncertain, 9th-11th October (P. V. Harvey, K. D. Shaw, A. S. Vials *et al.*); ♂, age uncertain, 10th October (K. D. Shaw); ♀ or first-winter, 10th (L. Farrell, N. J. Riddiford, N. & P. Thomson). Out Skerries, ♀ or first-winter, 9th-23rd October (J. M. & T. P. Drew, P. M. Ellis, E. Tait *et al.*).

1991 Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, first-winter ♂, trapped 29th September (T. L. Hobson, D. J. & P. M. Scanlan *et al.*).

1992 Essex Hanningfield Reservoir, ♀ or first-winter, 4th October, photo. (D. Acfield, J. Miller, L. Steward).

1992 Norfolk Salthouse Heath, ♀ or first-winter, 7th-9th October (D. J. Holman, R. G. Millington *et al.*).

(White Sea, eastwards across Siberia, East Caucasus and Northern Iran) The Committee is currently studying the problem of startlingly white-rumped Stonechats with bright wing-flashes which tend to turn up on spring passage, but may merely be extreme examples of *S. t. hibernans*.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (3, 25, 2)

Dyfed Ramsey Island, ♂, 25th October (K. Dobbs, D. Thomas, D. Woodhead) (fig. 8).

Grampian Donmouth, ♀, 8th October (S. L. Agnew, D. M. Pullan).

(Southeast Europe and South-central Asia; winters East Africa) The Dyfed observation was supported by an excellent series of sketches (fig. 8, on page 550). The only previous Welsh record was on Skokholm, Dyfed, on 27th October 1968 (*Brit. Birds* 62: 477).

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (15, 38, 1)

Norfolk Stiffkey, first-winter ♂, 24th October to 1st November, photo. (S. Harris, D. J. Holman *et al.*) (plate 154).

1990 Dyfed Skomer, ♂, 4th May (Mrs A. C. Sutcliffe).

(Southern Europe, Northwest Africa and Southwest Asia, also Iran; winters West Africa) Pale Northern Wheatears *O. oenanthe* continue to present pitfalls for less experienced birders in both spring and autumn, and any autumn claims still call for the utmost care.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (11, 31, 2)

Norfolk Horsey, 29th October (A. C. Frost). Hunstanton and Heacham, ♀, 16th November to 7th December, photo. (C. Gomersall, A. Hay *et al.*) (plate 155).

(North Africa, Northwest Arabia, east to Mongolia; winters Sahara, Arabia and Pakistan) Two more typical late-autumn records.

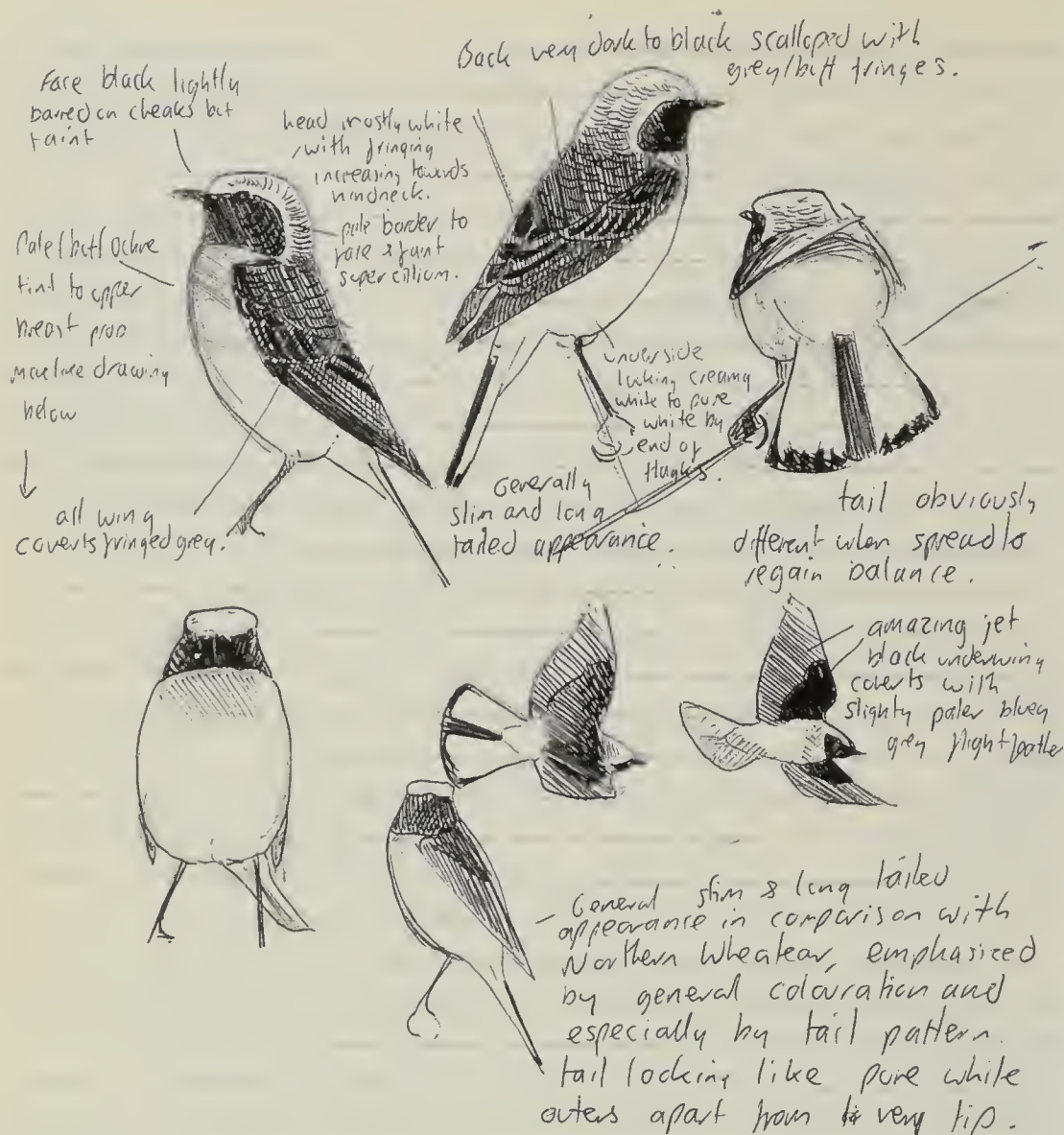


Fig. 8. Adult male Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, Ramsey Island, Dyfed, 25th October 1993 (D. Woodhead)

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (29, 16, 3)

Shetland Seafield, Lerwick, 1st October (G. W. Petric *et al.*).

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, 21st September (J. Vaughan).

IRELAND

Down Copeland Island, 16th-20th April.

(Northern and Central Siberia; winters Southern India and Southeast Asia)
Two records in the 'peak' period for this species. The St Kilda bird gave its lone observer the runaround along perilous cliffs. It seems possible that the Irish bird had wintered in Western Europe.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* (0, 3, 1)

Scilly Tresco, 11th October (C. McClure), presumed same, 15th-18th, photo. (P. D. Bowerman, R. F. Reader *et al.*) (plate 156).

(North America; winters Southern USA south to Guatemala) Scilly's third, the previous two being in 1984 and 1987. Crowd behaviour after its rediscovery was said by some to have stretched propriety to its very limits.



156. Above, Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*, Tresco, Scilly, October 1993 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



1157. Above, first-winter Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1993 (R. C. Wilson)

158. Below, first-winter River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*, Fair Isle, September 1993 (Dennis Coutts)



Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (1, 17, 1) *

Orkney Holm, Mainland, trapped 21st October, photo. (R. G. Adam, E. J. Williams *et al.*).

(North America; winters Central America south to Argentina) One of these, but no Grey-checked *C. minimus* this year. Nonetheless, within three days of Flamborough Head's Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* (0, 14, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 7th-14th October, photo. (per W. H. Wagstaff) (plate 157), presumed same, St Agnes, 15th-16th, photo. (D. Booth, N. J. Hallam *et al.*).

(Siberia and Eastern Asia to Japan; winters China and Indonesia) Yet another on the Scilly scorecard. Surely they must turn up on the mainland? Sifting through flocks of newly arrived Redwings *T. iliacus* may one day bear fruit.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 21, 4)

Norfolk Sheringham, first-winter ♀, *T. r. atrogularis*, trapped 31st October, photo. (D. H. Sadler, K. B. Shepherd, M. C. Young-Powell *et al.*), presumed same, Sheringham Park, 31st (D. E. & M. J. Saunt, J. R. Williamson *et al.*).

Scilly St Martin's, first-winter ♀, *T. r. atrogularis*, 13th-14th October, photo. (P. Clark, M. Coath, A. W. F. Hearn *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, probably ♂, *T. r. atrogularis*, 11th October (P. A. Jenks, A. J. Leitch, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*), Whalsay, probably first-winter ♀, *T. r. atrogularis*, 19th-23rd October (Dr B. Marshall *et al.*).

(Central Asia; winters Northern India and China) The Norfolk bird was a nice find for members of the new ringing venture at this site.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 45, 3)

Norfolk Sheringham, first-winter, trapped 29th September, photo. (D. Riley, K. B. Shepherd, S. C. Votier *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped 17th September (P. A. Jenks, M. R. Lawn, A. J. Leitch *et al.*), Sumburgh, 27th September (P. A. Dennis, A. V. Moon, S. A. Webb *et al.*).

(East Eurasia from Central Russia to North Japan; winters Philippines and Southeast Asia) Strong suspicions that this species may turn up occasionally in Norfolk, for instance in 1985, are now borne out, albeit in the hand. Two of the three previous records in England were in November (Lincolnshire, 1909; Tyne & Wear, 1984), but a trapping in Hampshire on 23rd September 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 484) comes closer to this one. The Shetland records were typical.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 13, 3)

Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, 25th-28th May, trapped 25th (I. Brown, P. A. Jenks, A. J. Leitch *et al.*); first-winter, 26th-27th September, trapped 26th, photo. (T. R. Cleeves, Dr S. & Mrs P. Cox, A. J. Leitch *et al.*) (plate 158). Out Skerries, first-winter, 9th-10th October, trapped 9th, photo. (J. M. & T. P. Drew, P. M. Ellis, E. Tait *et al.*).

(Central and East Europe and West-central Asia; winters Southeast Africa) Shetland records now total nine, the last in 1984.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 19, 2)

Shetland Fair Isle, 31st May (N. J. & Mrs E. A. Riddiford, M. Stout, E. Thomson *et al.*); probable adult, 8th-11th September, trapped 8th (G. Anderson, P. A. Jenks, A. J. Leitch *et al.*).

1992 Humberside Flamborough Head, first-winter, trapped 27th September, photo. (P. A. Laissey, D. I. M. Wallace, P. J. Willoughby *et al.*) (plate 141).

IRELAND

At sea First-winter, came aboard fishing boat 254 miles (409 km) southwest of Ireland, 14th September, died a few days later.

1991 Cork Galley Head, first-winter found dead, 13th October.

(South Russia and Asia; winters Southwest Asia and India) Previous spring records were on Fair Isle, Shetland, in 1984 and 1992, on the Isle of May, Fife, and in Suffolk in 1988. Owing to an unfortunate breakdown in communications, an autumn record from Norfolk has yet to be dealt with. In the Channel Islands, one was trapped and photographed at La Claire Mare, Guernsey, on 19th August (plate 142). Germany's second-ever, on 5th October, provided a distraction for the members attending the Association of European Rarities Committees' meeting on Heligoland (*Brit. Birds* 87: 322, 355-359).

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 11, 7)

Northumberland Bamburgh, first-winter, trapped 25th September, photo. (M. Bell, M. S. Hodgson *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, trapped 19th May, photo. (P. Doyle, A. E. Duncan, Dr K. F. Woodbridge *et al.*).

Shetland Out Skerries, first-winter, 9th-15th October, trapped 9th, photo. (J. M. & T. P. Drew, P. M. Ellis, E. Tait *et al.*). Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped 22nd October, then Sumburgh 23rd-29th October, dead 31st, photo. (P. M. Ellis, H. R. Harrop, K. Osborn *et al.*), now at Royal Scottish Museum.

Suffolk Fagbury Cliff, first-winter, trapped 19th September, photo. (G. L. Mortimer, N. Odin, S. H. Piotrowski *et al.*); first-winter, trapped 4th October, photo. (G. L. Mortimer, S. H. Piotrowski *et al.*).

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, first-winter, 4th October, dead 7th (T. J. Dix, K. Douglas, J. Vaughan *et al.*).

(Eurasia eastwards from Finland; winters India and Sri Lanka) The influx of at least seven in 1912 now seems less astonishing. We must sympathise with the hapless trainee ringer on Fair Isle who, with commendable concern for a bird with an apparently slight scalp injury, decided on prompt release without noticing the true identity of his prize capture. Who can boast of having never 'thrown away' a good bird?

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 150, 5)

Kent Lydd, in song, 23rd May (M. Farrow). Elmley, in song, 27th May to at least 5th June, tape-recorded (J. A. Rowlands *et al.*).

Norfolk Titchwell, in song, 11th-17th June, photo. (J. Feeney, R. Q. Skeen *et al.*).

Northumberland Bamburgh, adult, trapped 3rd October, photo. (M. Bell, M. S. Hodgson, B. Meerow *et al.*).

Shetland Geosetter, trapped 22nd May (K. Osborn, D. Suddaby *et al.*).

1989 Dorset Hengistbury Head, 24th September to 2nd October, trapped 24th (J. H. Morgan *et al.*).

1992 Devon Axmouth, in song, 15th-17th May (J. Wagstaffe *et al.*).

(Europe, Southwest and East Asia and North Africa; winters Africa) A typical year, though October records are very rare.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 36, 12)

Cleveland Marske-by-the-Sea, 18th-19th September, photo. (R. C. Hart, D. Money, J. J. Turner *et al.*).

Dyfed Skokholm, 25th-28th September, photo. (J. E. & J. W. Donovan, I. & K. Johnson *et al.*).

Grampian Newtonhill, 23rd October to 19th November, photo. (K. D. Shaw, J. L. Swallow *et al.*).

Humberside Flamborough Head, trapped 7th September, *photo. (D. Hursthouse, P. J. Willoughby *et al.*). Spurn, 16th-17th September, trapped 16th, photo. (D. J. Bowes, L. J. Degnan *et al.*).

Kent Between Margate and Broadstairs, 12th September (B. E. Wright *et al.*). Isle of Grain, 18th September (Dr A. M. Hanby).

Scilly St Martin's, first-winter, 19th-27th October, trapped 20th, photo. (M. & Mrs L. Love *et al.*). St Agnes, 27th September (P. A. Dukes *et al.*).

Shetland Sumburgh, 20th-21st September (G. J. Hinchon, T. Lawrence *et al.*). Seafield, Lerwick, 22nd October to 9th November, trapped 24th, photo. (W. Jackson, K. Osborn *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 18th-19th September, photo. (C. G. Thomas *et al.*).

(Northwest Russia, east to Mongolia and south to Iran; winters India) This plethora of records seems to match the timing of occurrences of the largely sympatric Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*. Those in Cleveland and Grampian were found in suburban gardens.

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* (0, 2, 1)

Borders St Abb's Head, in song, 23rd-27th May, photo. (T. P. Drew, K. J. Rideout *et al.*) (plate 159).

(Southeast Spain and the West Mediterranean islands; winters in Northwest Africa) Quite how and why this diminutive and allegedly short-distance Mediterranean migrant should yet again reach Britain is a real mystery, although Saharan winds may have something to do with it.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* (0, 1, 0)

1992 Yorkshire, North Filey, ♂, in song, 24th-29th May, trapped but not ringed 24th, photo. (P. J. Dunn, R. E. Harbird, C. C. Thomas *et al.*).

(Southwest Europe, Middle East, North Africa, Madeira, Canary and Cape Verde Islands; winters Northern Sahara and Northwest Africa) The species returns to the British List (*Ibis* 136: 254) with, this time, a wholly indisputable identification.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 276, 24)

Cornwall Bonython, The Lizard, ♂, 21st April (P. Greenstreet). Polgigga, ♂, 15th-16th October (G. C. Stephenson *et al.*).

Cumbria Milnthorpe, ♂, 12th April (D. Bowers, H. Howard, C. Scott).

Devon Landy, ♂, trapped 3rd May, photo. (R. & Mrs F. Castle *et al.*).

Dorset Hengistbury Head, ♂, 10th-15th April, photo. (B. Shaw *et al.*). Portland, ♂, *S. c. albistriata*, 21th May (N. Edgell, G. Walbridge *et al.*).

Dyfed Ramsey Island, ♂, *S. c. albistriata*, 12th May, photo. (I. D. Bullock, A. Elley, K. Luxford *et al.*).

Essex Walton-on-the-Naze, ♂, 15th August to 2nd September, photo. (Dr S. & Mrs P. Cox, J. Ball, T. H. Watson *et al.*) (plate 161).

Grampian Rattray Head, first-summer ♂, 17th April (T. W. Marshall, R. A. Schofield, M. K. Watson *et al.*).

Humberside Spurn, ♂, 28th-29th September (A. Archer, D. J. Standring, I. D. Walker *et al.*).

Kent Lydd, ♂, 30th April (M. J. Lawson *et al.*).

Norfolk Sidestrand, in song, 11th-15th April (J. Twell, M. A. Golley *et al.*).

Northumberland High Newton, ♂, 11th October (P. R. Davey, G. Platman).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-summer ♂, trapped 21th April (A. J. Leitch, B. Stammers); first-summer ♀, trapped 21th May (A. J. Leitch *et al.*). Foula, ♂, *S. c. albistriata*, 10th May, dead 27th June (Miss P. Gear, Mrs F. Ratter, D. Suddaby *et al.*), now at Royal Scottish Museum. Quendale Mill, ♀, 30th May (J. Clifton *et al.*). Skeld, ♂, *S. c. albistriata*, 11th-19th June (S. Blamire, P. Hall, A. Roberts *et al.*).

Suffolk Weybread, ♂, *S. c. albistriata*, 21th-25th April (A. Green, P. Vincent, R. Walden *et al.*).



159. Above, male Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*, St Abb's Head, Borders, May 1993 (R. C. Wilson)



160. Above, male Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*, Blakeney Point, Norfolk, May 1993 (R. C. Wilson)

161. Below, male Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, Essex, August 1993 (R. C. Wilson)



Trimley St Mary, first-summer ♂, 16th-22nd May, trapped 16th (G. Mortimer, S. H. Piotrowski *et al.*). Landguard. ♀ and first-summer ♀, both trapped, 28th May (M. C. Marsh, G. Mortimer, N. Odin *et al.*).

Sussex, West Sidlesham, ♂, 9th-16th October (Mrs N. Petrie-Hay *et al.*).

Western Isles Loch Eynort, South Uist, ♂, *S. c. albistriata*, in song, 9th May (S. L. Green, R. Taylor).

1992 Dorset Redcliffe Point, Weymouth, ♂, 5th-6th June (J. H. Blackburn).

1992 Wight, Isle of Bembridge, ♂, 23rd-27th April (*Brit. Birds* 86: 515), third-named observer was M. J. Sparshott, co-finder was G. Sparshott.

(South Europe, West Turkey, Northwest Africa; winters Northern and West Africa) A typical spread of records with, as usual, a predominance of males. After a gap of some years, the Committee returns to publishing racial identifications as *S. c. albistriata* when these are clearly established.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (1, 32, 5)

Dorset Portland, ♀, 2nd June (M. Cade *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, ♂, 28th-29th May, trapped 28th, photo. (D. Okines, D. Walker *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, first-summer ♂, 27th June to 16th October, trapped 30th June, photo. (S. Cochrane, P. J. Dunn, P. M. Scanlan *et al.*).

1992 Humberside Flamborough Head, ♀, 13th September to 6th October, trapped 29th September, photo. (P. A. Lassey, J. M. Pearson, P. J. Willoughby *et al.*).

IRELAND

Cork Cape Clear Island, ♂, 10th-12th April. Knockadoon Head, ♂, 14th-21st April.

(South Europe, Middle East and North Africa) A typical trio in Britain, including yet another long-stayer. The 1992 total rises to eight. The Irish records were the first there.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* (0, 9, 1)

Norfolk Blakeney Point, in song, 27th May to 1st June, photo. (A. Berst, M. A. Golley *et al.*) (plate 160).

(Middle East, Central Asia and Northwest Sahara) This enigmatic species continues to provide surprises. This, the first in spring, was even seen carrying nesting material.

Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* (2, 4, 0)

1991 Cornwall Saltash, in song, 20th-22nd May (E. Griffiths).

(South Europe, east to Turkestan, and Northwest Africa; winters Southern Sahara, India, Pakistan, Iran and Arabia) A not unfamiliar song first drew attention to this loner, which eventually gave good enough views to prove its identity and add one more to 1991's crop of rare warblers.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 230, 7)

Dorset Verne Common, in song, 1st June (C. E. Richards).

Kent St Margaret's Bay, in song, 12th June (Mrs K. McGill, L. Mullford, A. J. L. Smith *et al.*). Dungeness, 27th-28th August (P. G. Akers, R. J. Price *et al.*).

Man, Isle of Calf of Man, 21st-23rd June, trapped 21st, photo. (N. V. & Mrs M. McCanch).

Norfolk Holkham Meals, 28th August (C. H. & D. K. Lamsdell *et al.*).

Suffolk Lowestoft, 9th May (G. J. Etherington, S. Fairburn *et al.*).

1990 Scilly Treco, 9th October (D. J. D. Hickman *et al.*).

1991 Yorkshire, North Filey, trapped, 10th October (*Brit. Birds* 85: 540), was not accepted and was published in error.

IRELAND

Cork Cape Clear Island, adult, 19th October.



162. Above, male Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*, with House Sparrows *P. domesticus*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, August 1993 (R. C. Wilson)



163. Above, juvenile Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*, Sumburgh, Shetland, October 1993 (Dennis Coultts)
 164. Below, female or first-winter Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Portland, Dorset, September 1993 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



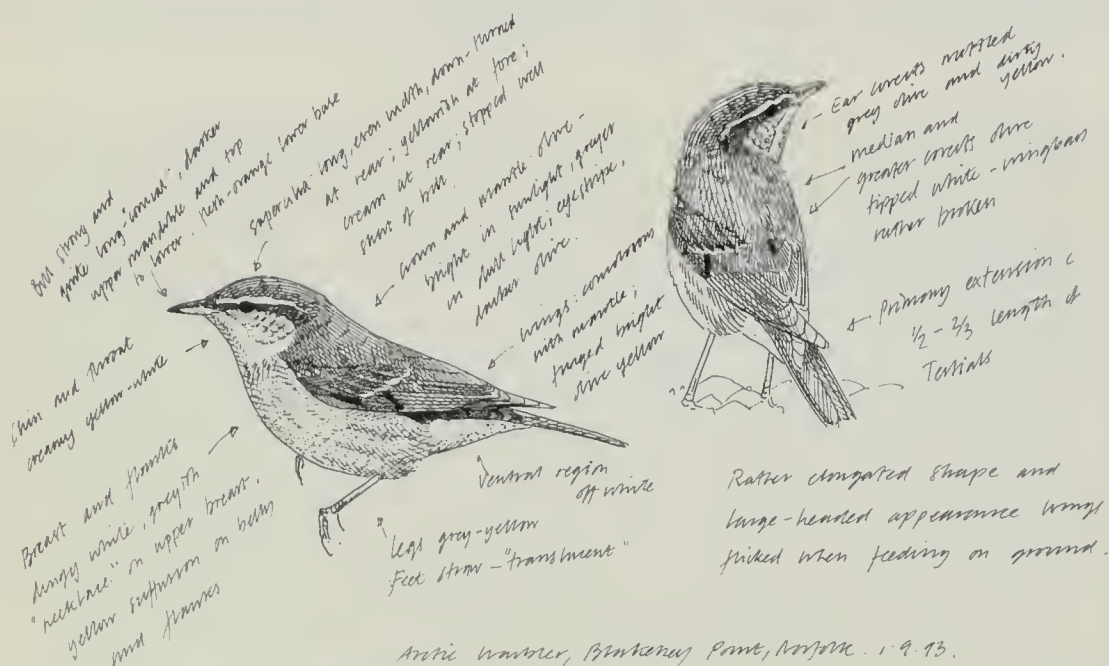
(Eurasia, east from Northern Germany; winters Pakistan, India and Indochina) After the deluge in 1992, a return to normality, but the spring trend continues. It is, perhaps, interesting that this is not happening with the following species.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 160, 13)

Cornwall Kelynack, 7th-10th October (G. J. Etherington, R. Johnson *et al.*).

Devon Start Point, 5th September (V. R. & Mrs S. Tucker *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 1st-2nd September, photo. (B. J. & Mrs S. Small *et al.*) (fig. 9, plate 143).



Arctic Warbler, Blakeney Point, Norfolk. 1.9.93.

Fig. 9. Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*, Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 1st September 1993 (Brian Small)

Shetland Sumburgh, first-winter, trapped 26th August (P. M. Ellis, Dr C. F. Mackenzie *et al.*). Fair Isle, 1st-6th September, trapped 1st (S. Brown, P. A. Jenks, A. J. Leitch *et al.*); first-winter, trapped 23rd September (D. M. Harris *et al.*). Fetlar, 6th September (N. Milligan). Scatness, 27th September (P. Naylor *et al.*). Northdale, Unst, 30th September to 3rd October (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Dale of Walls, 1st October (Dr C. F. Mackenzie).

Staffordshire Blithfield Reservoir, 8th-11th September (E. S. Clare, A. Latham, W. J. Low *et al.*).

Suffolk Fagbury Cliff, 30th September to 2nd October, trapped 30th (M. D. Crewe, S. H. Piotrowski *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 23rd October, photo. (D. Bywater, R. Crofton *et al.*).

(Northern Fennoscandia east to Alaska; winters Southeast Asia) A third good year; the Yorkshire record was a bit on the late side and that in Staffordshire was the first ever away from coastal and island localities. Pallas's Leaf Warblers *P. proregulus* were found in Worcestershire and Shropshire in 1987.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 136, 4)

Humberside Flamborough Head, 22nd October (M. S. & Mrs S. Bartlett, J. Carroll, P. E. Kenyon *et al.*).

Kent St Margaret's, 3rd-5th November (A. J. Greenland, I. P. Hodgson, P. Laurie *et al.*).

Northumberland Newbiggin, 7th November (T. R. Cleaves, S. Sexton, J. G. Steele *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 3rd October (M. Gray, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).

1987 Kent See Dusky Warbler.

1991 Norfolk Kelling, 21st-23rd October (D. J. Holman).

1992 Kent Kingsgate, 11th October (K. D. Lord).

1992 Shetland Sumburgh, first-winter, trapped 29th September (J. Coutts, K. Osborn, G. W. Petrie *et al.*).

(Central and East Asia; winters Southeast Asia) Nothing untoward this year.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 120, 11)

Kent Foreness, 1st November (S. D. W. Mount *et al.*).

Norfolk Between Blakeney and Morston, 1st November (D. J. Holman, K. Warrington *et al.*).

Orkney Stronsay, 10th October (J. Cooper, J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway, Miss J. Maples).

Shetland Voe, 3rd October (K. & Mrs K. Osborn). Fair Isle, 10th-11th October (P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Sumburgh, 25th-27th October (H. R. Harrop, C. Hill, I. A. Roberts *et al.*). Quendale Mill, 27th October (J. Clifton). South Exnaboe, 4th November (Dr C. F. Mackenzie). Sullom, 5th-15th November, trapped 6th, photo. (J. M. Drew, G. W. Petrie).

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, 4th October (T. J. Dix, K. Douglas, J. Vaughan).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 23rd October (R. E. Harbird, C. C. Thomas *et al.*).

1987 Kent Dungeness, first-winter, 20th-21st October, trapped 20th, photo. (S. D. McMinn, K. Mullarney *et al.*), previously accepted as Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi* (*Brit. Birds* 81: 585), now withdrawn as such by observers.

1989 Northumberland Farne Islands, 29th October, presumed same, 4th, 7th November (D. C. Richardson, I. T. Sims *et al.*).

(Central and Northeast to Southern Asia; winters Northern India and Southeast Asia) A good crop for Shetland this year. Resolution of the Dungeness, Kent, problem involved a lot of sweat and toil for all concerned and served to demonstrate that even trapped birds of this and the previous species always demand particular attention.

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (3, 121, 3)

Cornwall Land's End, 23rd September (J. F. Ryan *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 25th-30th September (J. Dustow, P. A. Maker, S. Rogers *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Scarborough, 17th August (R. H. Appleby).

1992 Scilly St Martin's, 24th September to 10th October (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

1992 Shetland Fair Isle, 30th September (*Brit. Birds* 86: 521), finders included H. R. Harrop, D. Stobbart.

IRELAND

1990 Cork Liss Ard, 12th September.

(Central, West and South Europe, Levant and Northwest Africa; winters northern Africa) With the northern limit of France's huge breeding population not far distant from Britain, it is surprising that spring-migration overshoots should remain so rare, only 18 in all.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* (0, 16, 1)

Kent Dungeness, first-winter, trapped 19th September, photo. (D. Okines, D. Walker *et al.*).

(Central and South Europe, Asia Minor and North Africa) Cast-iron identification of this ever-difficult species remains a challenge to even the most experienced ringer, but, for those with keen hearing, the distinctive call-note is emerging as a good field character.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 63, 10)

Cornwall Land's End, ♀, two juveniles, 11th-13th October, photo. (P. H. Alcy, S. Cox, P. A. St Pierre *et al.*), presumed one of same. Porthgwarra, 13th (D. J. D. Hickman).

Kent Dungeness, adult, two juveniles, 1st-6th November; adult, 15th-16th; juvenile, 15th-17th (D. Jones, C. Lock, R. J. Price *et al.*).

Norfolk Titchwell, ♂, 23rd-28th April, photo. (P. & Mrs L. Shooter *et al.*) (plate 166).

Scilly Treco, ♂ and juvenile, 15th-28th October, photo. (G. C. Bond, J. & Mrs I. Miller *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, ♂, 25th July (A. Scott).

1989 Dorset Swincham, 10th January (P. A. Williams).

1992 Cleveland Teesmouth, adult, trapped 17th July, photo. (D. Clayton, R. T. McAndrew *et al.*).

(Western Europe to Manchuria; mainly resident, occasionally dispersive or eruptive) A typical scattering of appearances and a better-than-usual autumn passage. In the Channel Islands, a pair with a juvenile was seen at Vale Pond, Guernsey, on 7th-8th November.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 35, 2)

Fife Fife Ness, first-winter, 4th-9th November, photo. (D. E. Dickson, R. Shand *et al.*).

Kent Worth, 24th October to 4th November, photo. (I. Fisher, P. Littler *et al.*).

(South Asia to China; winters Northeast Africa) Photographs, whenever possible, are of singular value in the recording of this species.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 110, 4)

Dyfed Near St David's, 24th June (E. & G. P. Liddell), presumed same, Skomer, 2nd-4th July (C. Keightley, S. J. Sutcliffe, G. Walker *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 12th May (P. A. Jenks, A. J. Leitch, B. Stammers *et al.*). Norwick, Northdale and Skaw, Unst, first-winter, 30th September to 3rd October (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Backworth, 23rd May (J. Woodward).

IRELAND

1992 Wexford Hook Head, adult ♀, 1st June.

(South and East Europe and Southwest Asia; winters East and South Africa) Fortunate is any birder who stumbles across this rather unpredictable species. A slightly above-average year.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

L. e. pallidirostris (1, 5, 1)

An individual showing the characters of the eastern race *L. e. pallidirostris* was recorded as follows:

Wiltshire Swindon, first-winter, taken into care injured, 23rd September, released 24th, present to 28th, photo. (S. Langsbury, R. Packham, N. Pleass *et al.*) (plate 167).

(Southern and eastern Siberia; winters Pakistan, Iran, Arabia and East Africa) Although fate took a hand in producing this record, it served to demonstrate that, even in inland counties, almost anything can happen.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 229, 8)

Cornwall Nanquidno, juvenile, 27th-28th September (J. F. Ryan *et al.*). Mullion, juvenile, 12th October to 18th February 1991, photo. (A. R. & Mrs H. C. Pay *et al.*). St Levan, juvenile, 19th October (M. C. Hall, S. M. Lister).

Grampian Newburgh, juvenile, 24th-27th October, video-recorded (A. Anderson, P. Doyle, F. White).

Northumberland Farne Islands, juvenile, 9th-10th September (W. Makin, J. Riley, J. Sneyd).

Shetland Sumburgh, juvenile, 6th-30th October (D. & J. Counts) (plate 163).

Suffolk Landguard Point and South Felixstowe area, juvenile, 4th to at least 9th September (G. J. Jobson, N. Odin *et al.*).

1990 Scilly St Mary's, juvenile, 7th-11th September (M. Goodey, D. J. D. Hickman *et al.*).

1991 Scilly St Martin's, adult, 22nd September, 26th to 4th October, presumed same, St Mary's, 23rd-25th September, 4th October to 4th November (R. P. Clay, D. J. D. Hickman *et al.*). Gugh and St Agnes, juvenile, 9th-28th October (D. J. D. Hickman *et al.*). St Mary's, juvenile, 13th-15th October (*Brit. Birds* 85: 518), present 5th-17th (per W. H. Wagstaff).

1991 Yorkshire, North Grassington, adult, 14th-20th July, photo. (Mr & Mrs K. Draycott).

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1992 Humberside Laytham, adult, 27th June (P. & R. Dove).

1992 Orkney North Ronaldsay, juvenile, 3rd October (M. Gray, S. McLean, C. Rennison *et al.*).

1992 Strathclyde Coll, adult, 15th July to 19th August, dead 20th, photo. (K. & Mrs P. Graham *et al.*).

1992 Yorkshire, North Cloughton, adult, 31st May, photo. (I. Glaves *et al.*).

IRELAND

Cork Cape Clear Island, juvenile, 19th-23rd September.

1989 Clare Shannon, adult, 16th July.

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia; winters India) Not one adult this year, which is unusual, especially for Scotland. A juvenile was seen at Fort le Crocq, Guernsey, Channel Islands, on 1st September.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* (0, 3, 2)

Dyfed Martin's Haven, ♂, 18th May (K. J. S. Devonald, K. Evans).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♂, 11th-19th August, trapped 11th, photo. (A. E. Duncan, J. Reid, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*) (fig. 10, plate 162).

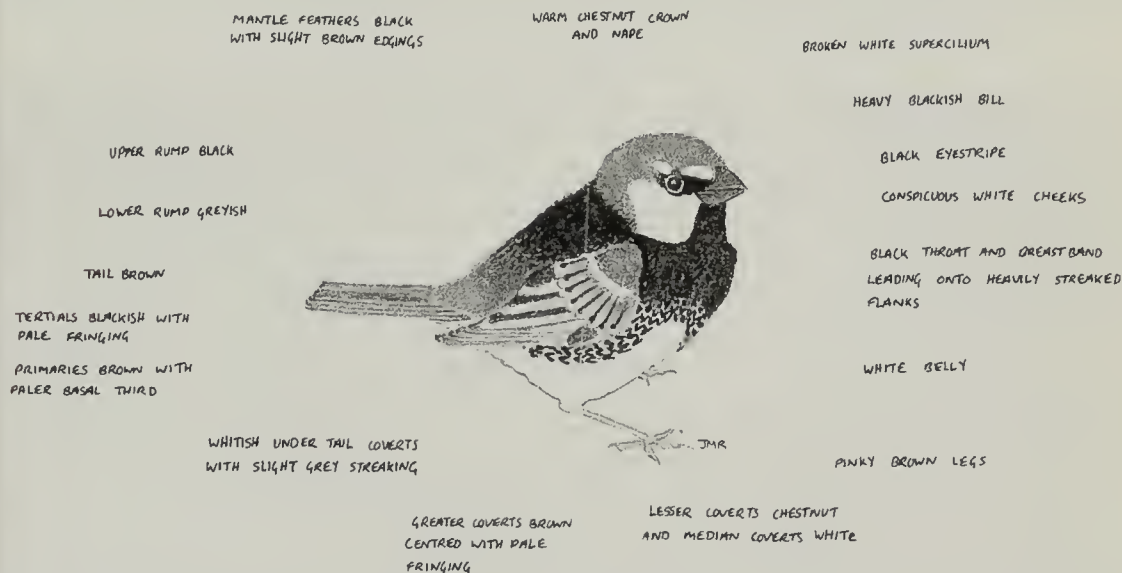


Fig. 10. Male Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, August 1993 (Jane Reid)

(Iberia, Northwest Africa, Sardinia and the Balkans east to Southwest Asia; mainly resident) None since October 1977, but now two in one year. Did the Dyfed bird keep flying northwards?

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 74, 3)

Cornwall Penberth, 9th October (J. F. Ryan).

Scilly Bryher, 1st-2nd October (C. J. Timmins *et al.*). Gugh, 6th-7th October (D. Price *et al.*).

1989 Scilly St Mary's, 20th-22nd September (G. Green, R. Simpson *et al.*).

1990 Humberside Kilnsea, 30th September to 1st October (*Brit. Birds* 86: 525), had already been published as accepted (*Brit. Birds* 84: 499).

(North America; winters Cuba and northern South America) Still very difficult to find, a tell-tale first glimpse being all-important. This year's arrivals were matched in timing by Ireland's two *Dendroica* warblers.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 254, 9)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 11th October, photo. (M. J. & P. J. Donnelly, M. Gray, C. Tulloch) (plate 120). Rendall, 8th November (J. B. Ribbands).

Shetland Fair Isle, 31st January to 6th February (I. Eunson, N. J. Riddiford, A. Wilson); 31st



165. Above, first-winter Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*, Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, October 1993 (Anthony McGeehan)



166. Above, male Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*, Titchwell, Norfolk, April 1993 (Robin Chittenden)

167. Below, first-winter Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* of eastern race *pallidirostris*, Swindon, Wiltshire, September 1993 (Mark Coller)



May to 1st June (P. V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*). Northdale, Unst, 9th-10th October (M. J. McLeod, M. G. Pennington *et al.*). Burravoe, Yell, 22nd October (R. J. Tulloch *et al.*). Norwick, Unst, 30th October (G. Gray per M. G. Pennington). Sullom, 23rd-25th November, photo. (J. M. Drew *et al.*). Baltasound, Unst, 24th November (M. G. Pennington).

1987 Nottinghamshire Warsop, 28th-31st January (A. Ashley, D. Morton, P. Naylor *et al.*).

1989 Hertfordshire Stanstead Abbots, 25th February (A. Harris, D. Vaughan, A. D. Wilson *et al.*).

1989 Shetland Fetlar, two, 14th October (M. J. Preece).

1989 Suffolk Martlesham, 11th-28th January (*Brit. Birds* 86: 525), observers should be J. A. Davies, D. C. Marsh *et al.*

1990 Humberside Spurn, 3rd November, photo. (D. J. Bowes *et al.*).

1992 Shetland Noness, 17th October (J. M. & T. P. Drew).

(Circumpolar Arctic; spreads erratically south in winter) Just to make life more difficult, it has now been brought to our notice that individuals of the *islandica* race of Common Redpoll *C. flammea* may look identical in the field to Arctic Redpolls of the *exilipes* race. This caveat may well need to be applied to a number of past and currently accepted records.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* (1, 16, 1)

IRELAND

Cork Cape Clear Island, first-winter, 7th-15th October (plate 165).

(North and Central America; winters south to Panama) The first since the six in 1985-87.

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* (0, 29, 2)

Humberside Flamborough Head, first-winter, 24th October to 1st November, photo. (S. Chalders, P. J. Willoughby *et al.*).

IRELAND

Waterford Brownstown Head, 3rd October.

(North America; winters northern South America) The first of this genus amongst the very few New World passerines ever to reach the East Coast.

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* (1, 18, 0)

(North America)

Lincolnshire Willingham, since 5th December 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 530), to 28th March.

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (1, 15, 1)

Dorset Dorchester, ♂, 7th-19th November, trapped 8th, photo. (E. Flatters, S. Hales *et al.*).

(North America) Not far removed in time or place from the Portland bird first seen on 3rd December 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 490).

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (34, 228, 44)

Borders St Abb's Head, ♂, 11th-14th May (T. P. Drew, L. G. R. Evans, K. J. Rideout *et al.*).

Cleveland South Gare, 16th-19th September, trapped 16th, photo. (D. Money, S. C. Norman).

Devon Lundy, first-winter ♀, trapped 8th October, photo. (M. Ashman, J. M. B. King, C. Matthews *et al.*).

Dyfed Skokholm, ♂, 20th May (P. Goddard *et al.*).

Fife Isle of May, two ♂♂, 21st May (J. Calladine, J. Graves, M. A. Robinson).

Grampian Rattray Head, ♂, 1st June (T. W. Marshall, S. A. Reeves *et al.*).

Highland Achrearnie, Caithness, 13th November (J. M. Gunn, S. A. M. Manson, E. W. E. Maughan).

Kent Wierton, Maidstone, ♀ or first-summer ♂, 19th-28th March (D. W. Taylor *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, ♂, 9th-11th May, photo. (D. W. Buckingham, K. M. Wilson *et al.*).

Norfolk Holkham Meals, sex uncertain, 18th May (K. Evans). Horsey Gap, 15th-18th September (P. R. Allard, K. R. Dye *et al.*). Sheringham, 16th September (K. B. Shepherd *et al.*).

Northumberland Farne Islands, ♂, 9th May (J. Sneyd *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♂, 31st May (D. A. Fairhurst *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, 6th-9th October, photo. (R. D. Bannister, M. W. Seaford *et al.*). Tresco, 11th October (M. A. Hardwick *et al.*). St Mary's, 17th-18th October (I. Prophet *et al.*) (plate 122).

Shetland Hillwell, ♂, 16th May (J. Clifton *et al.*). Grutness and Virkie, two ♀♀, 28th May (D. Suddaby *et al.*). Fair Isle, six: 13th-15th September (J. Coutts, A. J. Leitch, D. Ross *et al.*); first-winter ♀, 20th-24th September, trapped 20th (S. M. Dean, A. J. Leitch *et al.*); 29th September to 1st October (G. Anderson, P. A. Jenks, B. Stammers *et al.*); 3rd-4th (G. Anderson, P. A. Jenks, D. Suddaby *et al.*); 3rd-5th (P. A. Jenks *et al.*); 3rd-7th, photo. (R. E. Harbird *et al.*). Northdale, Unst, 14th-15th September (P. V. Harvey, B. P. Whittle *et al.*); two, 1st October (I. Spense). Fetlar, 23rd September (B. Thomason). Foula, 25th September (J. M. & T. P. Drew, M. J. McKee, D. J. Rigby). Toab, 25th-28th September (M. Barlow, S. W. Holmes, D. Rhymes *et al.*). Whalsay, 30th September (Dr B. Marshall, A. M. Stoddart). Skaw, Unst, 30th September (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey *et al.*); 3rd October (P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Scalloway, 2nd October (Dr C. F. Mackenzie). Quendale, 4th-8th October (H. R. Harrop *et al.*). Scatness, 8th October (H. R. Harrop *et al.*). Out Skerries, 9th October (J. M. & T. P. Drew, P. M. Ellis, E. Tait).

Tyne & Wear Marsden Quarry, 15th-16th September, photo. (S. McLean *et al.*); 16th September (C. N. Gibbins, R. B. Stidolph *et al.*).

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, 5th October (J. Vaughan).

Yorkshire, North Filey Dams, sex uncertain, 11th-12th April (K. Senior, H. J. Whitehead).

1986 Dorset Portland, 30th May (*Brit. Birds* 80: 566), now considered inadequately documented.

1992 Hampshire New Milton, ♂, 20th March (P. A. Stancliffe).

(Northeast Europe across to North Asia; winters Turkestan to China and Japan) What on earth is going on? The previous best years were 1987 (19), 1990 (17) and 1992 (15). The increase in spring records is roughly in proportion to that for the autumn passage, which suggests that the two are linked in some way. The early-spring records (together with a long-staying late-winter bird in the London area, which has yet to be fully reported, and a Cambridgeshire bird in early 1994) give a strong indication that more than a few may well be wintering far to the west of this species' normal winter range, perhaps in western Europe, perhaps in western Africa. It remains to be seen whether this is only a temporary phenomenon.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (93, 481, 41)

Borders St Abb's Head, three: 10th-11th May (J. F. McConnell, R. D. Murray, K. J. Rideout *et al.*); two, 15th May (D. K. Graham).

Cornwall Porthgwarra, 7th May (J. F. Ryan); 16th October (B. R. Cox, J. Flynn, R. Watts).

Dorset Lewell, first-winter, trapped 7th October; first-winter, trapped 9th November; first-winter, trapped 25th November, all photo. (E. Flatters).

Fife Kilmimming, 20th September (D. E. Dickson).

Grampian Girdleness, 10th September (S. A. Reeves, B. J. Stewart).

Merseyside Ecclestone Mere, 26th December to 19th March 1994, trapped 26th December (C. Davies, A. Jones *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 14th-17th September (per D. J. Holman). Blakeney and Morston Marshes, 1st-2nd November (A. P. Benson *et al.*).

Northumberland Farne Islands, 29th September (W. Makin, J. Riley, J. Sneyd).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, five: 27th September (P. Cosgrove, P. Doyle); 4th-12th October (P. J. Donnelly *et al.*); 9th-12th, trapped 9th (J. Reid *et al.*); 12th-15th (A. Mitchell, J. Reid, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*); 5th November (J. Reid). Stronsay, 30th October to at least 31st December, photo. (J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway, Mr & Mrs N. Kent).

Oxfordshire Near Letcombe Bassett, 18th February to 8th March (N. J. Hallam, A. Tomczynski, S. A. Young *et al.*).

Shetland Scatness, 12th September (P. M. Ellis *et al.*). Fair Isle, six: first-winter, trapped 24th September (P. A. Jenks, A. J. Leitch, B. Stammers *et al.*); 24th-25th September (J. V. Brighten, A. Hall, M. Henty *et al.*); first-winter, 24th September to at least 5th October, trapped 24th, photo. (J. M. Bayldon, M. D. Hobbs, S. Williams *et al.*); 26th September (P. A. Jenks *et al.*); 26th September (T. M. Melling, K. D. Shaw *et al.*); first-winter, trapped 28th (J. M. Bayldon, S. M. Elsom, A. J. Leitch *et al.*). Northdale, Unst, 25th September (C. Donald, K. & Mrs K. Osborn). Foula, 27th September to at least 5th October (J. M. & T. P. Drew, M. J. McKee, D. J. Rigby). Sumburgh, 29th September to 5th October (R. Proctor *et al.*); 30th October (P. Sclater *et al.*). Grutness, 30th September to at least 3rd October (A. V. Moon, S. A. Webb *et al.*). Grutness and Sumburgh, 4th-5th October (P. M. Ellis, H. R. Harrop *et al.*). Fetlar, 1st-4th October (B. Thomason). Wester Skeld, 7th October (C. D. R. Heard). Seafield, Lerwick, 9th October (Dr C. F. Mackenzie). Sullom, 6th-7th November, trapped 6th (J. M. Drew, G. W. Petrie *et al.*).

Somerset Parrett Estuary, 14th October (N. E. Wall).

Surrey Beddington Sewage-farm, 12th February to 17th April, photo. (S. J. Aspinall, Beddington Farm Bird Group *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 22nd October to 4th November, photo. (D. Bywater, J. Harwood, A. Norris *et al.*) (plate 121).

1991 Scilly St Mary's, 21st October (D. J. D. Hickman *et al.*).

1991 Tyne & Wear Tynemouth, 11th October (G. P. Bull, I. Moorhouse *et al.*).

1992 Cornwall Bude, 2nd February to 8th March (F. H. C. Kendall *et al.*).

1992 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 3rd-6th October (P. J. Donnelly *et al.*); 4th-9th October, trapped 4th (A. E. Duncan, L. Wells *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and North Asia; winters Turkestan to India and Southeast Asia) Desk-weary birders in the Northern Isles and elsewhere will be relieved that this species has finally passed the statistical test whereby it ceases to be a national rarity at the end of 1993. For all that, two late-winter records this year, together with the additional record from 1992, keep interest in trends alive, particularly in comparison with the previous species. The Dorset trio was caught in a field purposely sown with millet and maize. Worth a try in your own garden?

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 150, 8)

Devon Bolberry Down, probably first-winter ♂, 7th November (B. R. Field, P. A. St Pierre).

Dorset Portland, ♀ or first-winter, 8th-10th September, photo. (M. Cade, P. A. Coe, M. Rogers *et al.*) (plate 164).

Northumberland Farne Islands, ♀ or first-winter, 15th-16th September, photo. (W. Makin, J. Riley, J. Sneyd).

Orkney Stronsay, ♀ or first-winter, 20th-21st September, photo. (K. A. D. Cutting, J. F. Holloway).

Scilly St Agnes, ♀ or first-winter, 14th-15th September (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*). St Mary's, ♀ or first-winter, 1st October (P. Allison, R. A. Hopkinson, M. A. Newell *et al.*).

Suffolk Landguard, ♀ or first-winter, 4th September, photo. (C. Allen, P. Kitchener *et al.*), presumed same, Fagbury Cliff, 6th (J. M. Cawston). Landguard, ♀ or first-winter, 14th September, photo. (C. Allen, B. J. Small *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe across North Asia; winters India and Southeast Asia) Whilst occurrences in the Southwest are not without precedent (eight since 1961), the only previous records in East Anglia were in 1905, 1907, 1913 and 1992. Seven English records in one year is totally atypical and not since 1970 (a blank year in Britain as a whole) has none been seen on Fair Isle. That in Devon was the first ever to be recorded after early October. It is to be hoped that the Continental bird-markets have nothing to do with all this.

Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi* (0, 3, 0) *

1990 Sussex, East Icklesham, first-winter ♂, trapped 17th October, photo. (D. P. Butterfield, J. P. Moulton) (plates 148 & 149).

(Central and East Siberia; winters Mongolia and China) A shock record, not least for the ringers who, on seeing Colin Bradshaw's paper on Black-faced Bunting *E. spodocephala* (and Pallas's Reed Bunting) (*Brit. Birds* 85: 653-665), suddenly realised the true identity of a bunting they had photographed in the hand two years previously.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (9, 96, 10)

Cambridgeshire Chesterton, ♂, 24th May, photo. (L. Attwood, G. M. S. Easy, C. A. E. Kirtland).

Cornwall Rame Head, ♂, 27th-29th May (K. Pellow *et al.*). Delabole, ♂, 27th-31st May, photo. (S. Barrow, A. Bond, G. P. Sutton).

Devon Ottery St Mary, ♂, 27th May, photo. (C. M. Saunders). Newton Ferrers, ♂, 2nd-3rd June (S. Bird, Mr & Mrs Lawrence).

Hampshire Purbrook, ♂, 28th May, photo. (Mr & Mrs P. Gawthorpe, G. M. & H. A. Wearn).

Kent Dungeness, ♂, 30th May (C. D. Abrams, M. Pocock).

Strathclyde Bruichladdich, Islay, ♂, 7th June to 4th July, photo. (Dr T. ap Rheinallt, Dr M. A. Ogilvie, Mrs M. Perrons).

Suffolk Oulton, ♂, 30th May (P. Belton, J. & K. Halls).

Western Isles Likisto, Harris, ♂, 1st July (A. Campbell, A. Poot), same, Shadrer, mid July, photo. (per P. Cunningham).

1992 Clwyd Llanarmon-yn-Ial, ♂, 9th-10th June, photo. (L. W. Hawkins, J. Reddy *et al.*) (plates 146 & 147).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia; winters India) Although weather patterns differed, this spring arrival matches the nine in 1992. In Hampshire, a male near Grateley from mid March until found dead on 4th April has to be regarded as likely to have been an escape. In the Channel Islands, there was a male at Vale, Guernsey, on 19th-22nd June.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* (0, 21, 1)

Scilly Tresco, first-winter ♂, 12th-14th October, photo. (A. W. Benton, A. G. Gough, S. Saddington *et al.*).

(North America; winters Central America to Peru) Cumbersome in the bushes, but fleet of wing, this was the first record of this attractive creature since 1988. Scilly's ninth.

Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see *Ibis* 136: 253)**White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* (not known, 16, 0)

1972 Berkshire/Surrey Wraysbury Reservoir, two adults, 10th November (C. D. R. Heard), same, Kempton Park, Surrey, 11th (per C. D. R. Heard), presumed same as Dungeness, Kent, 11th-12th (*Brit. Birds* 73: 530).

1972 Surrey See above.

1975 Warwickshire Little Packington, adult, 17th July (J. M. Bayldon), presumed same as Essex, 6th, Kent, 11th, Humberside, 16th (*Brit. Birds* 70: 443).

1989 Glamorgan, West Whiteford, 24th September, probably since 21st (R. J. Reigdon).

(Balkan region; some winter Northeast Africa) A pelican of uncertain species was seen at Woolverstone, Suffolk, on 7th-8th September 1991.

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* (0, 3, 1)

Kent Dungeness, 3rd May (R. J. Price, D. Walker *et al.*).

1973 Staffordshire Belvide Reservoir, 29th April (A. R. Dean *et al.*).

1984 Avon Chew Valley and Blagdon Lakes, 24th August to 5th January 1985; also at Cheddar Reservoir, Somerset (A. J. Merritt, A. D. Whatley *et al.*).

1984 Somerset See above.

1985 Avon See above.

1985 Somerset See above.

1990 Yorkshire, South Potteric Carr, 14th September (T. Rhodes, the late A. Smith *et al.*).

(Mediterranean region of Europe and North Africa and Middle East; winters locally or south to Central and West Africa) Although amongst the commonest of ducks in captivity in Britain, this species may well be visiting us naturally and is therefore now included in category D1 (*Ibis* 135: 497). All occurrences should continue to be reported.

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata* (0, 10, 0)

1975 Leicestershire Cropston Reservoir, ♂, 27th December to at least 27th March 1976 (R. E. Davis *et al.*).

1976 Leicestershire See above.

1981 Warwickshire Kingsbury Water Park, ♂, 24th October to 6th December (A. Keatley *et al.*).

1984 Yorkshire, South Potteric Carr, ♂, 4th-7th February (A. J. Sinclair).

1986 Norfolk Welney, ♂, 9th-10th December (J. B. Kemp), 27th (R. Neale).

1987 Kent Motney Hill, ♂, 6th February to 17th March (M. C. Buckland, J. Harflett *et al.*), presumed same, Lower Rainham, 26th, 31st May (M. C. Buckland).

1987 Norfolk Welney, ♂, 20th August to 8th October (J. B. Kemp *et al.*), presumed same as 1986 above.

1987 Northamptonshire Pitsford Reservoir, ♂, 15th February to 5th April (D. J. Burges, M. H. Rogers *et al.*), presumed same, Thrapston Gravel-pit, 12th December (D. Caswell), there or Ringstead Gravel-pit to 6th March 1988 (per R. W. Bullock).

1988 Cambridgeshire Buckden, ♂, 1st April (C. A. E. Kirtland).

1988 Norfolk Cley, ♂, 7th-15th May (P. J. Heath, D. J. Holman *et al.*).

1988 Northamptonshire See 1987 Northamptonshire above.

1989 Norfolk Cley, ♂, 11th-28th May (N. E. Gammon, C. R. Keightley, Mrs P. Walton *et al.*), presumed same as 1988 above.

1989 Warwickshire Middleton, first-winter or eclipse ♂, 5th November (J. Asbury, A. R. Dean, D. Long).

1991 Devon Kenwith, ♂, 19th October to 6th December (D. Churchill *et al.*).

(Eastern Siberia; winters North India, Japan, Korea) The species is common in captivity and the possibility of escape is always present. Although unlikely, natural occurrences cannot be ruled out and the species is now included in category D1 (*Ibis* 135: 497). All records remain welcome.

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* (0, 3, 0)

1978 Glamorgan, West Worms Head, Gower, 24th July to 11th August, photo. (H. E. Grenfell).

(Central and Southern North America) The statistics include the two category A records which appear earlier in this Report but not the likely escape listed in Appendix 3. The possibility of assisted passage across the Atlantic requires a selective approach in categorising occurrences of this species, especially as it is not a long-distance migrant (*Ibis* 135: 496).

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* (0, 1, 0)

1992 Shetland Fair Isle, first-summer, 1st-2nd July, trapped, photo. (P. V. Harvey *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 85: plate 297).

(Southern and eastern Siberia, Japan, China, Korea and India; winters southeast to Indonesia) Allocation of this species to category D1 was explained recently (*Ibis* 136: 254-255; *Brit. Birds* 87: 247-252).

Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki* (0, 1, 0) **

1991 Humberside Stone Creek, first-winter, 16th-17th November, photo. (R. T. Parrish, G. J. Speight, J. M. Turton, J. Ward *et al.*).

(Central and East Siberia and Japan; winters Indochina, Malaysia, western Indonesia) Allocation of this species to category D1 was explained recently (*Ibis* 136: 255; *Brit. Birds* 87: 247-252).

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris*

This species has been common in captivity and is considered an unlikely natural vagrant here. It is now removed from category D (*Ibis* 136: 255); past published records are listed in Appendix 3.

Appendix 2. List of records not accepted

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include (a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) without circulation, after discussion with the Honorary Secretary; (b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; (c) those mentioned in 'Seasonal reports', 'The ornithological year' or 'Recent reports' in this journal if full details were unobtainable; or (d) certain escapes.

In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced, on the evidence before us, that the identification was fully established; in only a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

1993 Little Bittern Near Tonbridge, Kent, 29th July; Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire, 3rd October. **Night Heron** Valleyfield, Fife, 26th April. **Great White Egret** Tyttenhanger Gravel-pit, Hertfordshire, 26th November. **Glossy Ibis** Glazebury, Greater Manchester, 12th May. **American Wigeon** Hayle, Cornwall, ♀, 23rd May; Loch Spynie, Grampian, 13th October. **Blue-winged Teal** Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 20th August. **King Eider** Sanday, Orkney, 9th May. **Black Kite** Westport Lake, Staffordshire, 11th April; Great Bentley, Essex, 30th April; Long Green, Hereford & Worcester, 23rd May; Belvide Reservoir, Staffordshire, 29th May; Holme (village), Norfolk, 9th June; Fleet, Hampshire, 3rd July; East Mersea, Essex, 19th August. **White-tailed Eagle** Navax Point, Cornwall, 11th September. **Lesser Kestrel** Pershore, Hereford & Worcester, 31st August. **Red-footed Falcon** Stewartby, Bedfordshire, 8th May; Portland, Dorset, 11th May; Stanpit Marsh, Dorset, 21st May; Minsmere, Suffolk, 23rd May; Grimsby, Lincolnshire, 30th May; Rye, East Sussex, 10th August; Portbury Wharf, Avon, 25th September; Westonzoyleland, Somerset, 13th October. **Eleonora's Falcon** Sandwich Bay, Kent, 6th October. **Gyr Falcon** Cairngorm, Grampian, 13th April; Upton Warren, Hereford & Worcester, 18th June; Wistow, Leicestershire, 6th July; Leden Urquhart, Fife, 16th December. **Little Crane** Priory Country Park, Bedfordshire, 4th September. **Cream-coloured Courser** Colonsay, Strathclyde, 17th October. **Collared Pratincole** Sundridge and Bessels Green, Kent, 2nd July. **American Golden Plover** Ythan Estuary, Grampian, 28th October. **Pacific Golden Plover** St John's Loch, Highland, 22nd September. **Sociable Lapwing** Ditchford Gravel-pit, Northamptonshire, 29th May. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Ynyslas, Dyfed, 4th May; Northam Burrows, Devon, 9th September. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Rossall Point, Lancashire, 16th September. **Great Snipe** Spurn, Humberside, second individual, 19th September. **Marsh Sandpiper** Wroxham Broad, Norfolk, 19th April. **Lesser Yellowlegs** Hunstanton, Norfolk, 21st March; Camel Estuary, Cornwall, 6th September. **Spotted Sandpiper** Stonar, Kent, 23rd June. **Wilson's Phalarope** Northam Burrows, Devon, 11th September. **Laughing Gull** Ramsgate, Kent, 3rd February; Carsphairn, Dumfries & Galloway, 8th February. **Bonaparte's Gull** Bainton, Cambridgeshire, 12th February; Earl's Barton, Northamptonshire, 10th October; Addlestone, Surrey, 13th November. **Slender-billed Gull** Marlow, Buckinghamshire, 6th October. **Ross's Gull** Portishead, Avon, 24th January; Flamborough Head, Humberside, 31st January; Whitburn, Tyne & Wear, 15th March. **Gull-billed Tern** Bowmore, Islay, Strathclyde, 6th August; Seaview Duver, Isle of Wight, 10th October. **Caspian Tern** Evie, Orkney, 15th June. **Bridled Tern** Seaford, East Sussex, 30th May. **Whiskered Tern** Wiltone Reservoir, Hertfordshire, 13th August. **White-winged Black Tern** Minsmere, Suffolk, 3rd September; Draycote Water, Warwickshire, 10th September;

Pennington Flash, Greater Manchester, 11th, 13th, 24th September; Blagdon Lake, Avon, 16th September; Sheringham, Norfolk, 27th September. **Brünnich's Guillemot** Glynde Gap, East Sussex, 9th January. **Snowy Owl** Gedgrave, Suffolk, 1st January. **Pallid Swift** Llanishen and Lisvane Reservoirs, South Glamorgan, 6th June. **Alpine Swift** Dinton Pastures, Berkshire, 29th April; Ashford, Surrey, 29th April; Birstall, Leicestershire, 14th May; St Mary's, Scilly, 30th May, 10th June; Selsey, West Sussex, 10th July. **Calandra Lark** Great Orme, Gwynedd, 17th August. **Short-toed Lark** Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex, 5th December. **Crag Martin** Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, 19th September. **Red-rumped Swallow** Witheridge, Devon, 21st April; Stolford, Somerset, 22nd August; Rye, East Sussex, 16th October. **Red-throated Pipit** Stronsay, Orkney, 15th September; Merryton, Strathclyde, 2nd October; Reddish Vale, Greater Manchester, 20th October. **'Siberian' Stonechat** Barn's Ness, Lothian, 13th May; Dunnet Head, Highland, 22nd September; Pennington Marsh, Hampshire, 9th October. **Isabelline Wheatear** Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, 8th October. **Black-eared Wheatear** Church Norton, West Sussex, 21st March; Southam, Warwickshire, 14th April; Skokholm, Dyfed, 25th-26th September. **Desert Wheatear** Ginst Point, Dyfed, 16th November. **Dusky Thrush** Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, 18th November. **Dark-throated Thrush** St Mary's, Scilly, 15th October. **Marmora's Warbler** Newtown, Isle of Wight, 19th August. **Subalpine Warbler** Skokholm, Dyfed, 4th May. **Greenish Warbler** Cot Valley, Cornwall, 6th October. **Arctic Warbler** St Margaret's, Kent, 28th August; Burravoe, Yell, Shetland, 30th-31st August, 16th-19th September. **Bonelli's Warbler** Hengistbury Head, Dorset, 10th August; Warden Point, Sheppey, Kent, 29th August; Marton Mere, Lancashire, 15th November. **Collared Flycatcher** Weston-on-Trent, Derbyshire, 9th May. **Nutcracker** Thrapston, Northamptonshire, 22nd January; Sidmouth, Devon, August. **Rosy Starling** Martin Mere, Lancashire, 27th September. **Parrot Crossbill** Kielder Forest, Northumberland, 9th December. **Rustic Bunting** Lunna Ness, Shetland, 25th May. **Little Bunting** Barns Ness, Lothian, 12th September. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** The Naze, Essex, 16th September.

1992 White-billed Diver Loch Indaal, Islay, Strathclyde, 6th April; Sinclair's Bay, Highland, 20th May; Turnberry Point, Strathclyde, 19th, 28th December. **Black-browed Albatross** Between Anstruther and Isle of May, Fife, 13th June. **Little Shearwater** Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 7th September. **Soft-plumaged Petrel** Cley, Norfolk, 26th March. **Great White Egret** Mull, Strathclyde, 8th June. **Glossy Ibis** Weirwood Reservoir, East Sussex, 22nd May. **Black Kite** Ruxley, Kent, 17th April; Stackpole, Dyfed, 27th May; Brome, Suffolk, 7th August. **Red-footed Falcon** Sturminster Newton, Dorset, 7th-25th May; Fen Drayton, Cambridgeshire, 30th May, 7th-8th June, 20th September; Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire, 30th May, 2nd June; Teesmouth, Cleveland, ♂, 11th June; Laugharne, Dyfed, 22nd September. **Collared Pratincole** Thorntonmoor Reservoir, West Yorkshire, 28th July. **Pacific Golden Plover** Warsash, Hampshire, 21st August. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Eden Estuary, Fife, 10th October. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Point of Air, Clwyd, 8th-10th May; Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex, 17th May. **Dowitcher** Flamborough Head, Humberside, 9th August. **Spotted Sandpiper** Thursley Common, Surrey, 30th August. **Laughing Gull** Hunstanton, Norfolk, 1st September. **Gull-billed Tern** Minsmere, Suffolk, 28th June. **Aleutian Tern** Rye, East Sussex, 16th July. **White-winged Black Tern** Shibdon Pond, Tyne & Wear, 11th September. **Bimaculated Lark** Thornham Point, Norfolk, 28th-29th September. **Olive-backed Pipit** Niton, Isle of Wight, 4th October. **Red-throated Pipit** Colne Point, Essex, 19th September; Whitburn, Tyne & Wear, 28th September. **Isabelline Wheatear** Hawkser, North Yorkshire, 31st October. **Black-eared Wheatear** Keyhaven, Hampshire, 25th April; Kettleness Point, North Yorkshire, 19th September. **River Warbler** Tresco, Scilly, 28th September. **Booted Warbler** St Martin's, Scilly, 6th October. **Greenish Warbler** Cot Valley, Cornwall, 8th-10th October. **Arctic Redpoll** Tynninghame, Lothian, 12th January; Foula, Shetland, 16th February to 3rd April; Cupar, Fife, 29th March; Stove, Shetland, 14th May; Isle of May, Fife, 16th October; Rousay, Orkney, 31st December to 3rd January 1993. **Pine Grosbeak** Bucknell, Shropshire, 28th February. **Pine Warbler** St Mary's, Scilly, 10th October. **Rustic Bunting** Donnington Bridge, Oxfordshire, 7th December. **Little Bunting** Icklesham, East Sussex, 8th November. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Hengistbury Head, Dorset, 19th September.

1991 Bulwer's Petrel Keyhaven, Hampshire, 30th May. **Little Shearwater** Point of Air, Clwyd, 18th September, 16th October. **Asiatic Dowitcher** Point of Air, Clwyd, 22nd

September. **Wilson's Phalarope** Near Rhyl, Clwyd, 2nd August. **Gull-billed Tern** Kennack Sands, Cornwall, 21st April. **Caspian Tern** Point of Air, Clwyd, 26th August. **White-winged Black Tern** St John's Loch, Highland, 15th October. **Red-throated Pipit** St Mary's, Scilly, 12th October. **Desert Wheatear** Lowestoft, Suffolk, 12th October. **American Robin** Leigh Park, Hampshire, 10th February. **Olivaceous Warbler** St Mary's, Scilly, 23rd-24th September. **Greenish Warbler** Filey, North Yorkshire, 10th October. **Arctic Redpoll** Norwich, Norfolk, 4th-5th January.

1990 Night Heron Rye, East Sussex, 6th May; Tregaron, Dyfed, 3rd June. **King Eider** Dawlish Warren, Devon, 21st February to 3rd March. **Peregrine Falcon** *brookei* Laindon, Essex, 28th April. **American Golden Plover** Sidlesham, West Sussex, 3rd July. **Baird's Sandpiper** Witham Mouth, Lincolnshire, 16th September. **White-winged Black Tern** Oare, Kent, 28th August; 7th-20th October. **Alpine Swift** Lymington, Hampshire, 21st March. **Red-rumped Swallow** Worthing, West Sussex, 23rd April; Littlehampton, West Sussex, 22nd May. **Black-eared Wheatear** Filsham, East Sussex, 26th-27th August. **Collared Flycatcher** Loch Druidibeg, South Uist, Western Isles, 1st June; Lundy, Devon, 24th October. **Nutcracker** Camberwell, Greater London, early March. **Two-barred Crossbill** Sandringham, Norfolk, first-year ♂, 29th-30th September; Rhinefield, Hampshire, 2nd-14th November. **Parrot Crossbill** Sandringham, Norfolk, 18th December.

1989 Black Kite Beachy Head, East Sussex, 28th May. **Spotted Sandpiper** Lower Rivington Reservoir, Lancashire, 22nd December. **Oriental Turtle Dove** Portland, Dorset, 24th October. **Lesser Grey Shrike** Bishop Monkton, North Yorkshire, 1st November. **Little Bunting** Skomer, Dyfed, 9th April, 2nd-11th May.

1988 Sooty Tern Long Nanny, Northumberland, 10th-11th July. **Desert Wheatear** Flamborough Head, Humberside, 28th August. **Spectacled Warbler** Lape, Hampshire, 15th April. **Spanish Sparrow** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 29th-30th June.

1979 Black-browed Albatross Mingulay, Western Isles, 4th July. **Black-eared Wheatear** Mingulay, Western Isles, 25th-29th June.

1977 Pacific Golden Plover Cley, Norfolk, 20th August.

1975 American Wigeon Martin Mere, Lancashire, ♀, 23rd December. **Yellow-headed Blackbird** Westbere, Kent, 8th-14th June.

Appendix 3. List of records not accepted but identification proved

This list provides a permanent record of those occurrences which, usually on the grounds of likely escape from captivity, find no place in any category, but which may, at some future date, merit further consideration. It does not include (a) any record of a species for which natural vagrancy is wholly unlikely or (b) those records of presumed escapes already mentioned in the main text of this or earlier Reports. The decisions have been taken by this Committee unless otherwise shown.

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii* Meikle Loch area, Grampian, 17th March 1985, presumed same, Laman Valley, Tayside, 25th January to 8th February 1986, Slains, Grampian, 10th March 1988, Lossiemouth, Grampian, 23rd March to 16th April 1991 (*Ibis* 136: 254). **Emperor Goose** *Anser canagica* Handa Island, Highland, three, 4th July 1984. **Baikal Teal** *Anas formosa* Exton, Leicestershire, ♀, 5th-14th September 1990. **Cape Teal** *Anas capensis* Coatham Marsh, Cleveland, two, 18th May 1986. **White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* Bough Beech Reservoir, Kent, ♀, 28th February to 23rd March 1979, 28th December 1979 to 22nd March 1980; Chew Valley Lake, Avon, ♀, 9th June to 6th July 1985 (*Ibis* 135: 497). **Red-tailed Hawk** *Buteo jamaicensis* Hampstead Heath, Greater London, 14th October 1993. **Grey-headed Gull** *Larus cirrocephalus* Wiltone Reservoir, Hertfordshire, adult, 10th February 1991, same, Broghborough Lake, Bedfordshire, 17th-21st. **Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* Eastleigh, Hampshire, 15th-18th April 1981; Thornham, Norfolk, 13th-28th August 1985. **Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Isle of May, Fife, ♀, 29th April 1988, dead 30th (*Ibis* 135: 220-222; *Brit. Birds* 86: 359-366). **White-checked Starling** *Sturnus cineraceus* Flamborough Head,

Humberside, 17th-19th May 1990 (*Ibis* 135: 221). **Red-fronted Serin** *Serinus pusillus* Landguard, Suffolk, 6th June 1992 (*Ibis* 136: 255). **Desert Finch** *Rhodospiza obsolata* Spalding, Lincolnshire, 11th November 1990 to at least 31st March 1991. **Pallas's Rosefinch** *Carpodacus roseus* North Ronaldsay, Orkney, first-year ♂ or ♀, 2nd June to 14th July 1988 (*Ibis* 135: 498; *Brit. Birds* 87: 247-252). **Long-tailed Rosefinch** *Uragus sibiricus* St Abb's, Borders, ♂, 10th-21st May 1993. **Yellow-billed Grosbeak** *Eophona migratoria* Cheddington, Buckinghamshire, first-summer ♂, 10th June 1990. **Japanese Grosbeak** *Eophona personata* Ollaberry, Shetland, 13th June 1992, later taken into captivity. **Lazuli Bunting** *Passerina amoena* Holm, Orkney, 31st May to 8th June 1964; Isle of May, Fife, 22nd May 1971; Foula, Shetland, 12th July 1975; Murrayton, Cornwall, 15th-26th September 1990 (*Ibis* 136: 255). **Painted Bunting** *Passerina ciris* Voc, Shetland, ♂, 28th May 1972 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 528); Carnforth, Lancashire, ♂, 2nd-6th April 1974 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 544); St Mary's, Scilly, ♂, 25th June 1978; Burravoe, Yell, Shetland, ♂, 9th-27th July 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 531); Fair Isle, Shetland, ♀, 19th June, 1st July 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 585); Noss, Shetland, ♂, 8th June 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 532; *Ibis* 136: 255). **Black-headed Grosbeak** *Pheucticus melanocephalus* Staveley, Cumbria, 6th May 1978. **Yellow-headed Blackbird** *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* Leighton Moss, Lancashire, ♂, 4th-10th August 1964; Seaton Burn, Northumberland, ♂, 17th July to 14th August 1965; Sandbach Flashes, Cheshire, ♂, 20th September 1970; Unst and Yell, Shetland, ♂, 12th-13th May 1987; Fair Isle, Shetland, first-year ♂, 26th-30th April 1990 (*Ibis* 136: 255).



Announcements

The 'BB' Award for the Best Annual Bird Report Entries are invited for the fourth annual award (see accounts of the first, second and third awards, *Brit. Birds* 85: 299-308; 86: 163-165; 87: 171-173), which is open to all those clubs and societies in Britain and Ireland which publish an annual bird report. The aim of the Award is to provide public acknowledgment of the high quality of publications which may generally be seen only locally, and to encourage and promote high standards in all regional bird reports.

We hope that every local bird club and society in Britain and Ireland will submit a copy of its annual report for consideration by the judges.

The senior editor of the winning report will receive an inscribed book of his choice as a permanent personal memento of the award, and the club or society publishing the winning report will be authorised to use the logo of the Award on its reports and in its advertising and promotion.

Entries (which need consist only of the club or society's 1993 report and a covering note stating the number of members, the price of the report and from whom it can be obtained) should be submitted at once if available (the closing date for entries is 15th December 1994) to Bird Report Award, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Special POST-FREE 'BWP' offer Complete boxed sets of all nine volumes of *Birds of the Western Palearctic* are available through British BirdShop for £650.00 POST FREE to *British Birds* subscribers. Please use the form on pages xiii & xiv.

'BB' ties Available exclusively to *BB* subscribers, these distinctive ties in blue, green, brown or maroon feature our Red Grouse logo in white. Price £6.95 (incl. VAT) post free. Please order from Ali Gathercole, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ (or phone 01767-640025 for credit-card orders) quoting quantity of each colour and your *BB* reference number.



1993



Reviews

Finches and Sparrows: an identification guide. By Peter Clement. Illustrated by Alan Harris & John Davis. Christopher Helm Publishers, London, 1993. 500 pages; 73 colour plates; 44 line-drawings; over 280 distribution maps. ISBN 0-7136-8017-2. £29.99.

This is another of the identification guides which are fast becoming almost a classic series from the Christopher Helm stable, and it keeps up the generally very high standard. It covers all the true finches of the Fringillidae (i.e. Fringillinae and Carduelinae), the waxbills and allies of the Estrildidae and the true sparrows of the Passeridae—in all, 256 finches and 34 sparrows.

As are previous such volumes, this book is solely an identification guide. There is a short section in each species account devoted to status, habitat and behaviour, but this is aimed purely at where you can find the bird, with almost no mention of its ecology or behaviour. The other sections give full and detailed descriptions of the various plumages, voice, measurements, movements, geographic variation and distribution, and each account starts with a useful 'field characters' section, which deals explicitly with how to distinguish the species from similar ones.

Any identification guide will be judged largely by its plates. The 73 here are almost uniformly excellent, although some are fairly crowded, but why did Alan Harris not do them all? John Davis was allowed only ten.

Seeing this book has made me wonder, not for the first time, at whom this series is aimed and what the books are used for. The author says it is for use in the field. Fine, but it is a book about only one group of birds, and I for one am more likely to take into the field a book which will help me identify all the birds I am likely to see, and, if I am going abroad, weight is likely to dictate my taking only one or two larger reference books, again preferably for all the birds of the area rather than one family or group.

Partly as a result, I find the almost complete lack of any other information about the birds frustrating. For example, by reading this book, one would never know that any work had been done on Zebra Finches *Taeniopygia guttata*, that some of the classic bird-song work was done on Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* or that Bullfinches *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* are notorious among orchard farmers. Having said that, though, it is billed as an identification guide and there is no doubt that, as a collection of plates and descriptions of what the birds look like, there is no serious competition.

PETER LACK

Birds on Film: a photographic diary. By Steve Young. Hobby Publications, Liverpool, 1994. 115 pages; 175 colour plates. ISBN 1-872839-02-9. Paperback £14.99.

I hope that this book sells well. I hope that Steve Young continues to go twitching. I hope that he produces a book like this every year.

This book features 175 of Steve Young's photographs, mostly of rarities seen on a year's twitching during 1993. The text is in diary form, and—even for a non-twitcher such as myself—makes interesting and sometimes exciting light reading. Steve Young also does more than merely tick off and photograph the birds, for there are glimpses of interesting observations (such as the wing-clapping by the Cley Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*), as well as amusing asides (Steve Young does not think much of Dungeness, a place best left to Daleks).

This is an excellent way to acquire a set of splendid photographs of 1993 rarities for a mere £14.99. For once, the publisher's blurb does not exaggerate: Steve Young 'is without doubt one of the UK's top bird photographers'.

Other bird photographers will welcome the photographic details given for every shot, and the odd comment within the diary text concerning difficulties encountered and how these were overcome. There are also accounts of Steve's share of unsuccessful twitches, borne with affable resignation (at least in retrospect and in print).

I have enjoyed vicariously sharing Steve Young's year.

J. T. R. SHARROCK



Letter

Origin of European Pink-backed Pelicans Following the report of a Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* in Spain (*Brit. Birds* 86: 374-375), and one near Sagrado, northeast Italy, in September 1992, as well as other observations farther north in Europe (*Dutch Birding* 16: 106-110), I consider that it is important to outline the situation regarding the species in captivity in Italy.

Following the recovery of several escaped individuals, including one well out to sea, Roberto Basso, the Director of the Natural History Museum of Calimera (Lecce) in southeast Italy, investigated the presence of this species in zoos and parks in southern Italy. He found that huge numbers (perhaps hundreds) were imported into Italy in the years up to 1985 (when import restrictions were introduced) and were available at very low prices (about £100 each). By the time imports all but ceased, most zoos and parks boasted at least a pair. Being cheap and dubiously legal, many of the birds (collected as young at African colonies) were not wing-clipped, and over the years many have escaped. To give two examples: a zoo at Fasano near Brindisi began with 20 and now has four after deaths and escapes, and most of a group of 40 at the zoo in Catania, Sicily, have escaped or died.

The general picture reveals a species commonly kept in captivity in Italy and prone to escape, capable of travelling large distances, and supporting itself in the wild: the one near Sagrado stayed for at least two months. While the Spanish record seems the most credible of the European observations, I suggest that all records be treated with caution until the situation regarding captive birds in Europe is clarified.

PAUL TOUT

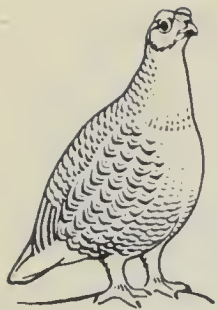
*United World College of the Adriatic, Via Trieste 29, 34013
Duino (Trieste), Italy*



Twenty-five years ago...

'This is the eleventh annual report of the Rarities Committee. Even without the Nutcrackers *Nucifraga caryocatactes*, the number of records submitted in 1968 was 510 (of about 113 species), the highest total so far and one which continued the steady increase since 1964 when, for comparison, the figure was no more than 260. In spite of this, only 89 were rejected and the acceptance rate of 83% was also the highest yet. Rejections have fluctuated between 76 and 102 in recent years, while the acceptance rate, although affected by the large-scale influxes of Richard's Pipits *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, has risen from 68% in 1963.' (*Brit. Birds* 62: 457, November 1969)

On 19th November 1969, a male Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*—only the seventh recorded in Britain and the first since 1938—was found near Worth Matravers, Dorset, and was destined to stay some six months. This spot was to become the centre of attention again, just short of 24 years later.



Government cuts hit ornithological research

ALL BTO RINGERS have received a letter from Joe Hardman, Chairman of the BTO Ringing Committee, informing them of new prices for bird rings and equipment that become effective immediately. From now on, the ring for a Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* will cost nearly £1.00 and that for every Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* approximately 12¹/₂p.

These prices may be of very little immediate concern to non-ringers, but what they reflect is a quite serious and substantial reduction in funding for the BTO from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. Funding by the JNCC has always been a major part of the financial resources available to the national ringing scheme and it reflected the importance placed by Government upon the information gathered as part of the national bird-monitoring programme.

It is outrageous that these cuts have been made part way through a long-term contract and in the middle of a financial year, when the BTO had finalised its plans for the season. This inevitably means that carefully planned work will not now be done. Obviously, there are financial restraints being placed upon the JNCC: they have also cut the monies available for seabird-monitoring, for example (just when the voluntary bodies are demonstrating how important that is).

Why not contact your MP and tell him if you think it is right or wrong that the Government resources should be reduced for bird-conservation science? You could suggest that he or she should raise the matter with the Secretary of State.

The Bird Fair

Binoculars, kids with painted faces, holidays to everywhere from Alaska to Australia, slide shows, computer programmes, videos, pagers, magazines, telescopes, waterproof jackets, peanuts and mealworms, ice creams and hot dogs, ringing demonstrations, paintings and wood carvings, Czechs, Poles, Italians, French, Dutch and Bulgarians, quizzes and competitions, raffles, Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* and Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*, every society imaginable, anti-mosquito clothing, Bill Oddie and Ian Wallace, children's games, badges and stickers, free hand-outs and plenty to buy. Yes, it's all at the British Birdwatching Fair at

Rutland Water. Over 12,000 people attended the 1994 fair and over £10,000 was raised for the Hahnahera appeal.

The winners of bottles of champagne in BB's mystery photographs competition were John Spencer of Cambridge on the Friday, E. Parnell of Spalding on Saturday and Jeff Higgott of Ipswich on Sunday.

Many, many people make the Fair possible, but very special thanks must go to Tim Appleton and Martin Davies for all their hard work that makes it happen. If you have not been yet, be there next year—it's great! Put it in your diary now: 18th-20th August 1995.

News from Bulgaria

We have just received the first copy of the English-language edition of *Neophron*, the magazine of the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds. The BSPB is one of the new fledgling societies to become established following the political changes in central and eastern Europe. It is now a little over three years old and boasts a membership approaching 850. This is the first copy of its magazine directed at the foreign membership (the Bulgarian-language editions being far from easy for most of us to follow). The contents include short articles on Important Bird Areas in Bulgaria, the successful construction of artificial nesting islands at the Atanasovska reserve, and details of key conservation projects for the Society in 1994.

Latest bird sightings include first and second

records of species for Bulgaria, such as Finsch's Wheatear *Oenanthe finschii*, Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* and Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, and new wintering records of species such as Black Kite *Milvus migrans* and Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*. Other exciting observations include three records of Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*, a count of over 59,000 Red-breasted Geese *Branta ruficollis* and a new possible breeding area for Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*.

Anyone seeking more information should contact the BSPB, 2 Gagarin Street, 1113 Sofia, Bulgaria. The annual subscription for foreign members is £10—a good way both to help Bulgarian ornithology and to open the door to some birding in a very exciting country.

Italian reminiscences

One of your compilers (BS) has just returned from a (literally) flying visit to the Po Delta, south of Venice, Italy. The most memorable moment of the trip was not the large number of Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea*, Black Terns *Chlidonias niger* or Zitting Cisticolas *Cisticola juncidis*—all three of which seemed to be everywhere—but took place in a garage while refuelling the car. Revealed during a casual flick through an Italian hunting magazine—provided as reading material for customers waiting for their petrol tanks to be filled—located amongst the recipes for deer, rabbit and wild boar, were explicit instructions on how to prepare, cook and eat Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos* and Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis*.

On the plus side, however, there were the first signs of EU money funding the re-flooding

and management of areas that had previously been drained (with EU money). Only small beginnings, 40 ha here and another 100 ha there, but at least it was getting wetter rather than drier. The Great White Egrets *Egretta alba* and Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica* seemed to appreciate it.

One final point: whilst watching the Italian Sparrows *Passer (domesticus) italiae* from the hotel window, BS gained the clear impression that, compared with the House Sparrows *P. domesticus* back home, their tails were longer and inclined to be fanned at the tip. Was this just an illusion brought on by the sun and the vino, or is it a case of distinctive jizz? Is there a difference in the length of the wing, primary projection, or length of tail? Anyone like to comment?

Some winter birding ideas

Why not try these this winter, but wrap up warm:

Nov. 5: Wirral high-tide birdwatch (Parkgate, Cheshire)—contact 0513-367681.

Nov. 10: Goose watch (Ynys-Hir, Dyfed)—contact 0654-781265.

Nov. 14: Wildfowl watch (Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire)—contact 0992-460031.

Nov. 27: Estuary birdwatch (Copperas Bay, Essex)—contact 0255-886043.

Dec. 17 & 18: Harrier roosts (Blacktoft Sands, Humberside)—contact 0405-704294.

Dec. 19: Christmas quackers wildfowl (Islay, Strathclyde)—contact 0496-85440.

Classic 1995 calendar

Help celebrate Northern Ireland's coastline and its birds in 1995. With help from their many friends, the RSPB Northern Ireland Office has produced a very special calendar for 1995. Each month is illustrated with a high-quality image by photographers René Pop, Steve Young, Arnoud van den Berg, Chris Gomersall and Anthony McGeachan, and an original vignette by Killian Mullarney. There can be little doubt that this will become a collectors' item and we strongly suggest that you do not miss the boat. The calendar is now available (for £5.50 incl. p & p) from the RSPB, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT18 1QR.

Kowa BIY presentation

The annual get-together at The Mall Galleries for the presentations of the Bird Illustrator of the Year awards has become one of the highlights of the year for the many bird artists who attend. The sponsorship by *Kowa telescopes* ensures that this tradition continues and brings broad smiles to the faces of the winners who receive *Kowa* scopes as part of their prizes (plates 168 & 169).

168. BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR 1994, Ren Hathway, receives his engraved salver and *Kowa* telescope from Mr Kenji Ajima, (*Kowa Europe*), London, July 1994 (*Steve Hickey/Pyser*)

169. BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR: from row, left to right, Max Andrews (winner of The Richard Richardson Award), Tim Worfolk (third), Ren Hathway (first) and Dan Powell (second); back row, left to right, Alan Harris (judge), Dr Tim Sharrock (judge), Mr Kenji Ajima (*Kowa Europe*), Robert Gillmor (judge) and Keith Shackleton (judge), London, July 1994 (*Steve Hickey/Pyser*)



Birding abroad

If you are thinking of going birding anywhere in the world, there are two organisations that it is worth contacting before you plan your trip.

The first, based in the UK, has just produced its latest catalogue of birdwatching reports based upon trips by amateur birders: a collection of sightings and site details from the Pacific islands to the Falklands, from China to Corfu. Described as essential to the travelling birder's library, *The Foreign Birdwatching Reports and Information Service Catalogue, August 1994* is

obtainable, price £1.00, from Steve Whitehouse, 5 Stanway Close, Blackpole, Worcester WR4 9XL.

From the Netherlands comes the Dutch Birding Travel Reports Service, offering a very similar operation and shortly to be publishing its new catalogue. The majority of the items are in English. A quick comparison of the two shows very little duplication, so for now it is necessary to consult both. Contact Ib Huysman, Postbus 737, 9700 AS Groningen, The Netherlands.

Rare breeding birds in Ireland

We read with interest (*IWC News* 80: 5) the following: 'The best reference for the status of breeding birds is perhaps the report of the (UK) Rare Breeding Birds Panel in *British Birds*, surely a model of how data can be presented. Interested parties should get in touch with IWC head office.'

If the IWC does decide to create a committee to carry out in Ireland the role performed in the UK by the RBBP, we look forward with great anticipation to its first annual report. The major benefit, however, will not be the vicarious pleasures provided by reading the compilation of records of rare breeding birds, but will be the added protection given to the birds themselves by conservationists having access to the full picture, rather than having to judge the requirements of individual instances in isolation. We wish the IWC good luck in its endeavours.

The address of the IWC is Rutledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

Viewing difficulty

'N & c' is clearly in Mike Everett's blood: he cannot avoid keeping his eyes open for us. It was Mike who spotted that Paul Jepson, whilst writing on the avifauna of Halmahera, Indonesia, in *World Birdwatch* (16: 2), inadvertently made a classic statement: 'the hardest bird to see is the Invisible Rail *Habroptila wallacii* . . . '.

All-Ireland Bird Race

May 1994 saw the first-ever All-Ireland Bird Race to raise money for the Irish Wildbird Conservancy's Countryside Appeal. As always, the rules were simple: see as many species as possible in a 24-hour period. Winners of the scratch team event (i.e. no county limits) were the RSPB (Northern Ireland) Head Office team of Clive Mellon, Matthew Tickner and Dave Allen. They clocked up 124 species, and won the Foster Motor Company Trophy. The winning county team, Trevor Hunter, Martin Enright, Patsy Burke and Niall Muga (the 'Eider Ors' from Sligo), managed 92 species. The race raised over £1,000 for the IWC.

BPY on show

The annual Bird Photograph of the Year award presentation at a Press Reception in London duly took place on 6th July, despite the railway signalmen's strike that day. The usual happy gathering of bird-photographers, bird-book publishers, members of the Press and guests seemed even happier than usual, perhaps because the 25 persons present had no trouble consuming the food and drink intended for 80.

The prizes were presented by Mrs Dorothy Hosking, maintaining the treasured link with the late Eric Hosking, the competition's former senior judge and *BB's* Photographic Editor for many years.

The 27 short-listed photographs were all projected, with comments and a commentary by Dr Richard Chandler. The top eight photographs were published by us in July (*Brit. Birds* 87: 326-332, plates 81-88). The winner—the Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* by Alan Williams—and several of the runners-up were also published by special arrangement in *Bird Watching* (August 1994, pages 5, 55-56).

The continued support of the sponsors of Bird Photograph of the Year—Christopher Helm Publishers/A. & C. Black and HarperCollins publishers—is greatly appreciated.

Nick Davies FRS

We are very pleased to report that Dr N. B. Davies has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Following closely on the election of Ian Newton (*Brit. Birds* 86: 230), this is welcome further evidence that the achievements of researchers in ecological and behavioural aspects of biology, and specifically ornithology, are now receiving due recognition from the scientific establishment.

Many subscribers will remember Nick's work on the territorial behaviour of Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 261-267) and on the mating system of Hedge Accentors (Dunnocks) *Prunella modularis* (*Brit. Birds* 80:

604-624)—two of the most fascinating papers in *BB* in the past decade—and his recent book, *Dunnock Behaviour and Social Evolution* (1992). His other major research topics have been on the feeding behaviour of Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata*, the territorial behaviour of speckled wood butterflies *Pararge aegeria*, mating competition of common toads *Bufo bufo*, the interaction between Common Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* and their hosts, and, most recently, behaviour of Alpine Accentors *P. collaris* in the French Pyrénées.

Nick tells us that 'The Dunnocks are delighted and shall wear gold rings to celebrate.' We are delighted, too.

The next IOC

The XXII International Ornithological Congress will be held in Durban, South Africa, in 1998 (probably in August). The President will be Prof. Dr Peter Berthold (Germany) and the Vice-President Dr Janet Kear (UK).

Scottish Bird Report 1992

With 72 information-packed pages, this is a publication which should interest all British birders, even those who did not travel north of the Border in 1992.

Right from the off, this is an innovative, attention-grabbing publication: the cover shows the outline of Scotland made up of bird names (Fair Isle is, appropriately, 'Pechora Pipit' and St Kilda 'Hooded Warbler', to take just two examples). Common as well as rare birds are covered, and there is a scattering of decorative line-drawings, but no photographs (the text refers to ones that have been published elsewhere).

The text is full of exciting facts. To take just two: the influx of about 150 Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina* in spring (65 in Shetland and 40 on Fair Isle) followed by Britain's first confirmed breeding record when a pair was seen carrying food for young at Creag Meagaidh NNR; and Fair Isle's first-ever spring Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* (there were 30 there in autumn, when there were a further 67 or so elsewhere in Scotland).

The SBR is edited by Ray Murray, and is supplied free to members of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (£15.00 p.a.). Non-members should enquire concerning current prices: contact the SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 7BT.

Stormy landmark

Apart from catching 'their' Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*, twice, for the fifth year in succession, the night of 29th/30th July saw the passing of the landmark of the 1,000th European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* processed at Tynemouth since 1988.

The status of storm-petrels has been completely revised by the work of Tynemouth ringers—Mark Cubitt and Mary Carruthers. Originally described as a rare visitor (1-10 annually) to the county recording area (Tyne & Wear north of the Tyne and Northumberland), over 1,000 European Storm-petrels have now been tape-lured at Tynemouth since 1988 and the species is now considered to be a 'well-represented' or regular summer passage visitor in this part of the North Sea. (Contributed by Tim Cleeves)

Austrian Atlas Supplement

The *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Austria: a summary of species accounts* is an invaluable English summary of the Austrian breeding-bird atlas reviewed in August (*Brit. Birds* 87: 361). The first seven pages give an overview of Austrian breeding birds, followed by 40 pages of short texts (about 200 words per species) covering all of Austria's breeding bird species. Anyone already owning the German-language Austrian atlas who finds difficulty in reading German will greatly welcome this slim volume. This supplement costs AS 180 (incl. p & p) separately, or AS 480 (inc. p & p) for the atlas itself plus the supplement, and is available from BirdLife Österreich, c/o Naturhistorisches Museum, 1014 Wien, Burging 7, Postfach 417, Austria.

ABA Code of Ethics

We in Britain have several codes of behaviour: the Country Code (published by the Countryside Commission), the Birdwatchers' Code of Conduct (e.g. *The Birdwatcher's Yearbook and Diary 1994*, pages 142-143) and the Codes for Rarity-finders and for Twitchers (*Brit. Birds* 75: 302-303).

The American Birding Association has recently published its 'guidelines of good birding behavior' (*Winging It* 6 (6): 12):

I. Birders must always act in ways that do not endanger the welfare of birds or other wildlife.

In keeping with this principle, we will

- * Observe and photograph birds without knowingly disturbing them in any significant way.
- * Avoid chasing or repeatedly flushing birds.
- * Only sparingly use recordings and similar methods of attracting birds and not use these methods in heavily birded areas.
- * Keep an appropriate distance from nests and nesting colonies so as not to disturb them or expose them to danger.
- * Refrain from handling birds or eggs unless engaged in recognized research activities.

III. Birders must always act in ways that do not harm the natural environment.

In keeping with this principle, we will

- * Stay on existing roads, trails, and pathways whenever possible to avoid trampling or otherwise disturbing fragile habitat.
- * Leave all habitat as we found it.

III. Birders must always respect the rights of others.

In keeping with this principle, we will

- * Respect the privacy and property of others by observing 'No Trespassing' signs and by asking permission to enter private or posted lands.
- * Observe all laws and the rules and regulations which govern public use of birding areas.
- * Practice common courtesy in our contacts with others. For example, we will limit our requests for information, and we will make them at reasonable hours of the day.
- * Always behave in a manner that will enhance the image of the birding community in the eyes of the public.

A fourth category outlines the responsibilities of birders in groups.

The ABA is currently considering possible revisions to strengthen this Code of Ethics and welcomes comments, which should be sent to Blake Maybank, Site 14A, Box 43, RR4, Armdale, NS B3L 1J4, Canada.

Northumberland Coast Project

Renowned for its unspoilt character, the Northumberland coast nevertheless experiences complex pressures ranging from area-wide pollution and erosion to more local car-parking congestion and habitat disturbance. The first annual report of the Northumberland Coast Project, supported by the County Council,

local Borough and District Councils and the Countryside Commission, outlines some of the major challenges addressed during 1993-94 and is available from Northumberland County Council, Planning & Environment Division, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF.

English Nature backs Dorset heathland

In August, English Nature launched its Wildlife Enhancement Scheme to restore traditional grazing to Dorset's internationally important heathland. The focus is on 43 designated SSSIs covering over 95% of the remaining heathland in Dorset.

The aim is for the restoration of traditional extensive grazing to reverse the encroachment of pine, birch and rhododendron, to the benefit of small heathland plants, while the resultant mixed-age heather will provide prime conditions for many invertebrates, such as the

silver-studded blue butterfly *Plebejus argus*. By clearing significant areas of scrub and trees, all heathland species should benefit, in particular the rare sand lizard *Lacerta agilis*, a target species for English Nature's Species Recovery Programme.

Of Dorset's 7,500 ha of heathland, well over 2,000 ha need urgent management to restore open heath. English Nature manages six heathland National Nature Reserves within the county. For more information, contact Jim White on Wareham (0929) 556688.

DNA testing

DNA genetic fingerprinting has proved to be a useful tool in the investigation of wildlife crime. By utilising blood samples from captive birds, and their alleged offspring, it has been possible to establish whether the birds were, in fact, related. There have now been six successful prosecutions where the technique has been used to disprove claims of breeding by captive falcons.

Recent research by the RSPB Investigations Section suggests that more than 200 birds of prey of six species are taken from the wild in the UK every year. It has often been suspected that many of these are 'laundered' through the national bird registration scheme so that they appear to be legally held captive individuals. DNA testing has now confirmed that some claims of captive breeding actually relate to birds that have been taken from the wild.

'Bird Watching' highlights

The popular magazine *Bird Watching* includes reference to *BB's* contents each month. We appreciate this co-operation, and reciprocate.

November's *Bird Watching* features the ID of crests and leaf warblers, by Hugh Harrop; waging war on garden pests; the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's Llanelli reserve; and Ian Wallace on birding in wooded farmland; there is also a 16-page travel supplement on birdwatching holidays.

Rarity descriptions

It is very helpful if all observers of rarities send in their descriptions (preferably to the relevant county or regional recorder) as soon as possible after the sighting. It will speed up the decision-making process if notes on all major autumn rarities are submitted by mid November at the latest. *Please do not wait until January.* Thank you. (Contributed by M. J. Rogers)

Short-rotation coppice

Using short-rotation coppice to provide fuel helps to reduce 'greenhouse-gas' emission, and the Forestry Authority gives free advice to ensure that it blends into the landscape. Coppice grown for renewable energy may become a significant new feature in the British countryside, bringing income to farmers and providing green energy.

For a free copy of *Advice Note 1 Short Rotation Coppice in the Landscape* contact Forestry Authority Conservancy offices or phone Dawn McNiven on Edinburgh (031) 334-0303.

'Marine Life Campaigner 1'

Members of the RSPB Marine Campaign Crew have recently received their first newspaper—*RSPB Marine Life Campaigner* issue 1. When the Society launched its Marine Life Campaign in May 1994, supporters were encouraged to sign up to the 'Campaign Crew' and help with a range of tasks aimed at achieving better protection for sea areas, compulsory routes for tankers and other ships so as to avoid sensitive ornithological areas, and sustainable fisheries management, and influencing governments via the 1995 North Sea Ministerial Conference. This newspaper is full of information and facts on progress to date, problems still to be addressed and what individuals can do to assist.

A further three issues are planned in the coming months, and if you want to help, or just want more information, write to Louise Dawson, Marine Life Campaign, RSPB. The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Michael Warren on view

An exhibition of Michael Warren's watercolours will be on show at The Wildlife Art Gallery, Phoenix House, 97 High Street, Lavenham, Suffolk, during 12th-30th November. Further information from Andrew Haslen on Lavenham (0787) 248562.

Amusing experiences

Has anything hilarious ever happened when you have been birding? It would be amazing if you had never had a funny experience—most of us could, surely, write a book of such events?

Well, that is exactly what Steve Davidson is doing, and he wants to hear from you. Send your tale to S. R. Davidson, 15 Lancaster Avenue, Weston Point, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 1BQ.

Shell helps Fife Bird Club

Fife Bird Club (membership 124 in July) has opened its third hide, at Braefoot Point, in hopeful anticipation of the autumn's passage of skuas *Stercorarius*. As part of the deal with *Shell Exploration & Production*, which owns Braefoot Point, club members are surveying the birdlife of the area for the *Shell* entry in the BTO Bird Challenge for Business.

Shell has also assisted in the publication of the second edition of the *Fife Checklist*, which is available (£2.00, incl. p & p) from D. Dickson, 45 Hawthorn Terrace, Thornton, Fife KY1 4DZ. (Information from Rab Shand)

Bonny Scotland!

We asked our well-known Scottish Photographic Consultant to help us with an advertisement for our new sweatshirts and tee-shirts by taking a photograph of them 'draped over some attractive Scottish scenery' (we had in mind a moss-covered bough or a lichen-encrusted drystone wall).

The 'Scottish scenery' chosen by Don Smith (see page vi, opposite page 525) is known locally as Heather and Lizzie (to whom—as well as to Don Smith—we are most grateful).

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—*Northern Ireland*

Tim Cleeves—*Northeast*

Frank Hamilton—*Scotland*

Barrie Harding—*East Anglia*

Oran O'Sullivan—*Republic of Ireland*

Alan Richards—*Midlands*

John Ryan—*Southwest*

Don Taylor—*Southeast*

Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*

John Wilson—*Northwest*

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'



Monthly marathon

Sponsored by



Entrants named September's pale-braced wader (plate 117) as: Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (69%), Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* (9%), Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* (8%), Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta* (6%), Little Stint *C. minuta* (4%), Least Sandpiper *C. minutilla* (3%) and a variety of other waders.

It was a juvenile Ruff, photographed by Jack Hill in West Sussex in September 1987. The eighth puzzle photograph in the current Marathon appears below. Have a go! The winner will be able to choose a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday to Africa, Asia or Northern America as his or her prize.

1170. Seventh 'Monthly marathon', eighth stage: photo no. 101. Identify the species. Read the rules on pages 25-26 of the January 1993 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th December 1994



For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 19th September to 16th October 1994

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Hayle Estuary (Cornwall), 23rd September; Tresco (Scilly) 23rd-27th September; over Penzance 27th September (all presumed same individual).

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* Vane Farm RSPB Reserve (Tayside), 28th September.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* Usual scattering, including one in the Editor's garden at 'Fountains', Blunham (Bedfordshire) on 1st October.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Rahasane (Co. Galway), 4th-8th October.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* Landy (Devon), 9th October.

Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* Rosscarbery (Co. Cork), 15th October.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* Greatham Creek (Cleveland), 27th-30th September.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* Near Rockliffe (Cumbria), 15th-16th October.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcau* Porlock Bay (Somerset), 13th October.

Bonaparte's Gull *L. philadelphia* Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire), 4th-6th October.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* St Kilda (Western Isles), 21st September.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 4th-11th October.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* About 70 in Britain from around 21st September; in Ireland: singles on Cape Clear Island on 9th and 12th October, and at Mizen Head (Co.

Cork) and Dursley Island (Co. Cork) on 10th October.

Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus* Galley Head (Co. Cork), 15th October; a scattering of two or three in Britain.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* Whalsay (Shetland), 20th-21st September and (presumed same) 5th October.

Desert Wheatear *O. deserti* Portland (Dorset), 11th October.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* Individual of red-throated race *ruficollis* at the Naze (Essex), 29th September to 7th October (potential first for Britain and Ireland); individual of black-throated race *atroglaris* on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 16th October.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* Blakeney Point (Norfolk), 19th September; Fair Isle, 21st September (found dead on 23rd).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* Holme (Norfolk), 10th October; St Mary's (Scilly), 14th-16th October.

Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* Prawle Point (Devon), 8th October.

Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes* Chatham (Kent), 9th October.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* Mizen Head, 8th-9th October.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* Filey Country Park (North Yorkshire), 16th October.

Song Sparrow *Zonotrichia melodia* Seaforth Docks (Merseyside), 15th-16th October.



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(25p/min cheap rate; 39p/min other times; incl. VAT)



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Alström, Colston & Lewington <i>A Field Guide to the Rare Birds of Britain and Europe</i> (HarperCollins).	£14.99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Baker <i>Identification Guide to European Non-Passerines</i> (BTO)	Paperback £16.50 <input type="checkbox"/>
Berthold <i>Bird Migration: a general survey</i> (OUP)	Paperback £17.50 <input type="checkbox"/> Hardback £35.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
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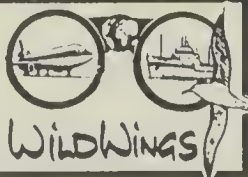
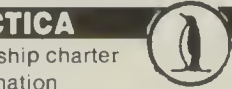
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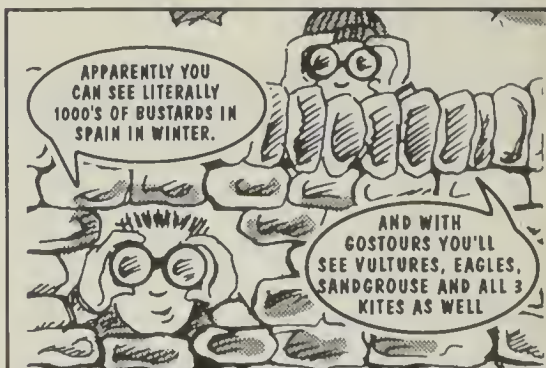
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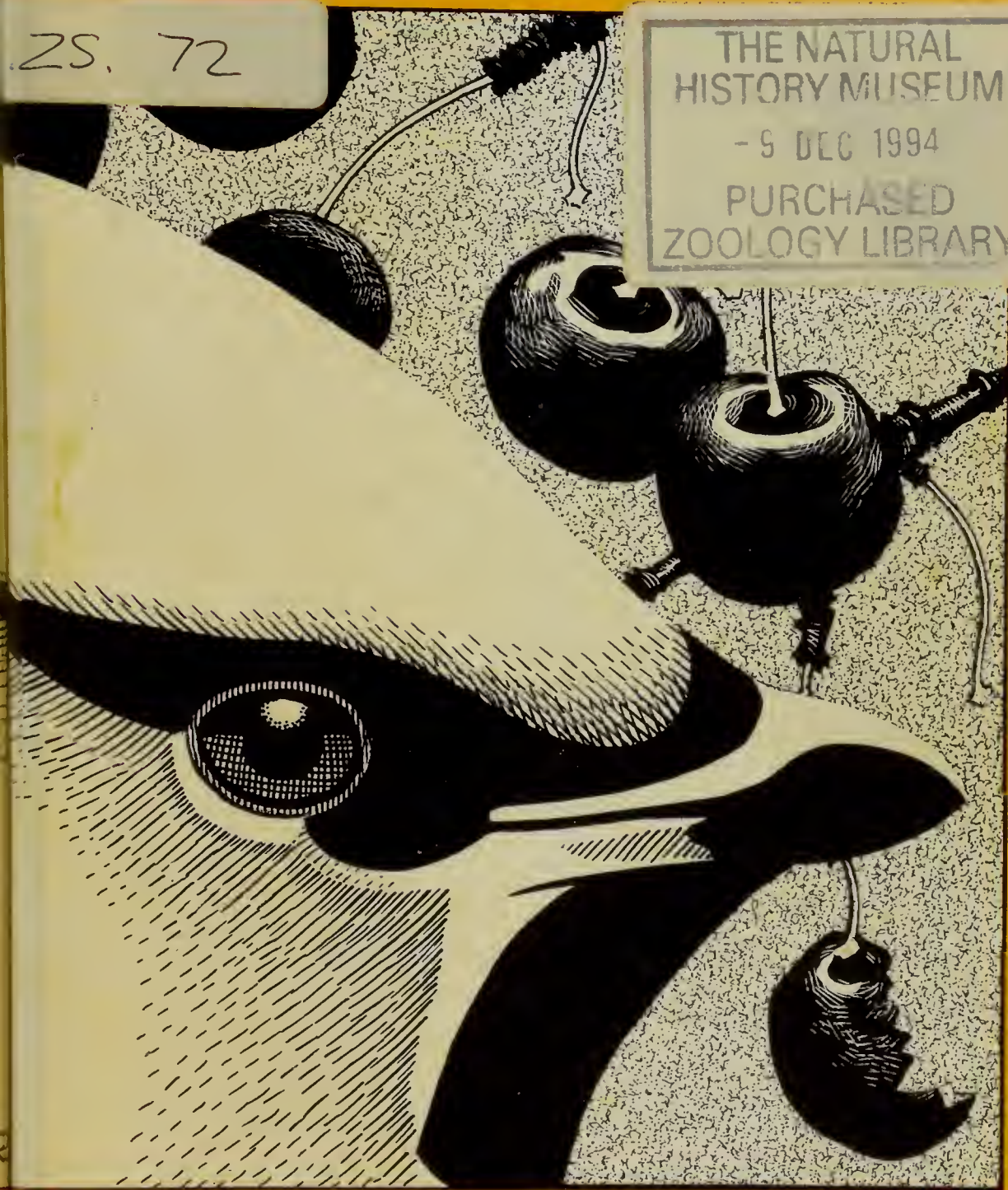
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WATNOR WATER BIRDWATCHING CENTRE	
THURSDAY 19TH & SUNDAY 20TH	WALES
WATNOR WATER BIRDWATCHING CENTRE	
THURSDAY 19TH & SUNDAY 20TH	LANCASHIRE
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THURSDAY 19TH & SUNDAY 20TH	DORSET
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THURSDAY 19TH & SUNDAY 20TH	CAMBRIDGESHIRE
WATNOR WATER BIRDWATCHING CENTRE	
THURSDAY 19TH & SUNDAY 20TH	YORKSHIRE
WATNOR WATER BIRDWATCHING CENTRE	

DECEMBER

THURSDAY 3RD & SUNDAY 4TH	KENT
WATNOR WATER BIRDWATCHING CENTRE	
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THURSDAY 3RD & SUNDAY 4TH	GREATER MANCHESTER
WATNOR WATER BIRDWATCHING CENTRE	
THURSDAY 3RD & SUNDAY 4TH	AVON
WATNOR WATER BIRDWATCHING CENTRE	
THURSDAY 3RD & SUNDAY 4TH	NORTH YORKSHIRE
WATNOR WATER BIRDWATCHING CENTRE	
THURSDAY 3RD & SUNDAY 4TH	ESSEX
WATNOR WATER BIRDWATCHING CENTRE	
THURSDAY 3RD & SUNDAY 4TH	LANCASHIRE
WATNOR WATER BIRDWATCHING CENTRE	
THURSDAY 3RD & SUNDAY 4TH	WALES
WATNOR WATER BIRDWATCHING CENTRE	
THURSDAY 3RD & SUNDAY 4TH	ESSEX
WATNOR WATER BIRDWATCHING CENTRE	

JANUARY

THURSDAY 1ST	GREATER MANCHESTER
WATNOR WATER BIRDWATCHING CENTRE	
THURSDAY 1ST & MONDAY 2ND	LANCASHIRE
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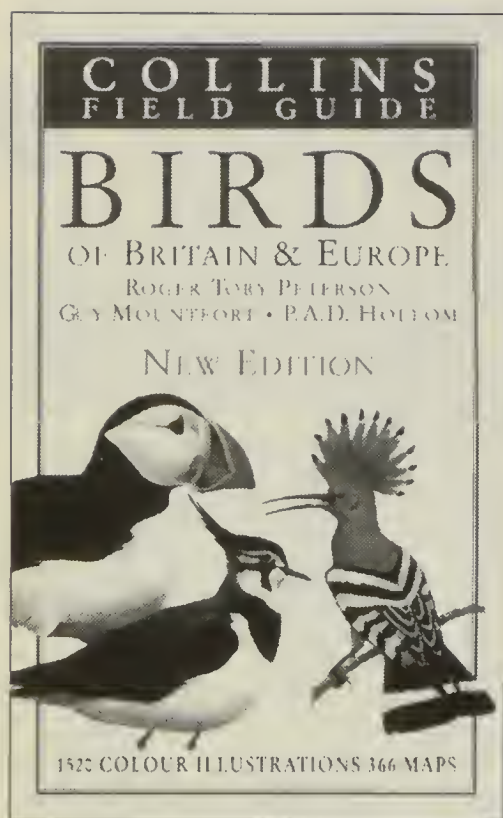
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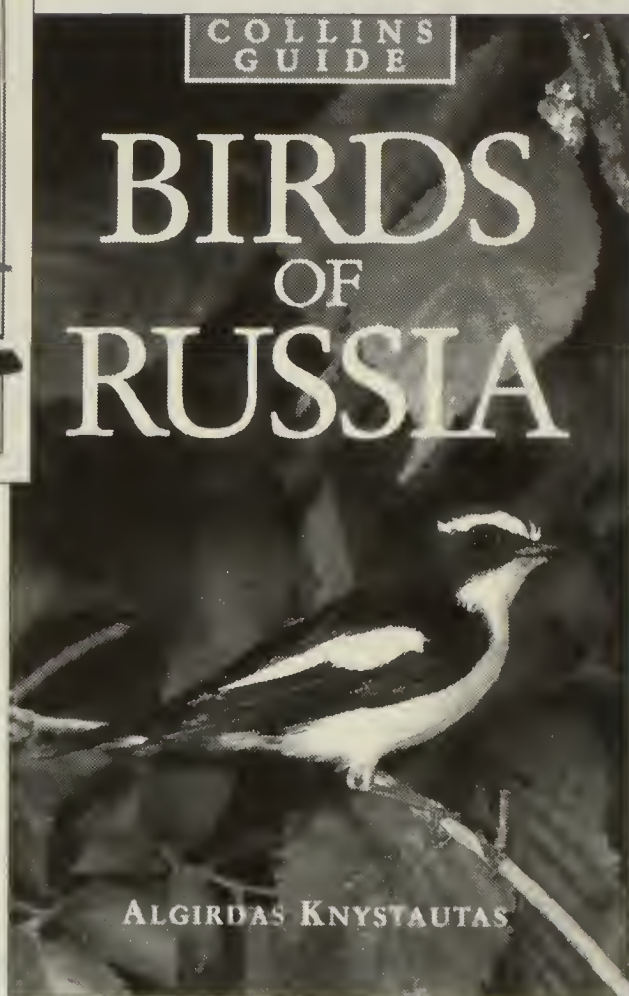
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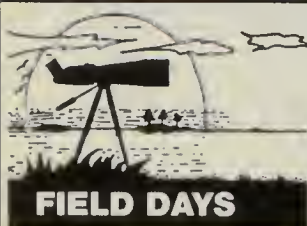
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British Birds

VOLUME 87 NUMBER 12 DECEMBER 1994

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Documentation now and for posterity

The basic year-by-year recording of British and Irish birds is carried out in a long-established and respected manner. The bird recorders and report editors in the counties and regions vet all the records they receive prior to publication in their annual reports, calling on the services of local expert committees as required. The documentation of each national rarity is assessed by the British Birds Rarities Committee or the Irish Rare Birds Committee, while that for any potential first record is additionally scrutinised by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee. The result is a permanent record which can be trusted, both nationally and internationally.

Telephone news-lines and the glossy magazines, together with compilations drawing from such sources, provide an excellent service, with instant or near-instant news, especially of rare birds. These provisional lists of reported sightings are, on the whole, pretty accurate, but can never substitute for the authoritative record which has survived the rigours of well-established, recognised, formal vetting procedures, supplying the international community and posterity with a reliable, official account.

Much valuable information on status and distribution of common (as well as rare) species is also documented at the county and regional level.

For these reasons, *British Birds* very strongly supports the county and regional bird clubs and societies, with their well-tried recording systems and their annual reports, together with the recently founded Association of County Recordors and Editors (ACRE). We similarly support the Bird Observatories Council, which co-ordinates the recording methods of the network of bird observatories around our coasts.

The role of the British Trust for Ornithology is extremely important, especially through its monitoring of population and distribution changes by long-running projects (such as the Common Birds Census, the Waterways Bird Survey, the Wetland Bird Survey, the Nest Record Scheme, Constant Effort Sites and the Bird Ringing Scheme) and special censuses or surveys of individual species or habitats. The combination of an enthusiastic amateur workforce co-ordinated by dedicated professional staff is of inestimable value. Much valuable research is carried out by, or under the supervision of, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, although mostly by staff, or fieldworkers under contract, rather than by volunteers. For the Republic of Ireland, the Irish Wildbird Conservancy combines the roles of the BTO and the RSPB.

We have always encouraged our readers to join the BTO and/or the IWC, as well as their local bird club or society and the RSPB, and to take part fully in the activities of these organisations.

British Birds has its contribution to make, and we shall continue to publish the results of fieldwork by both amateur and professional individuals and teams, having first applied the necessarily stringent rules of scientific discipline. We have no intention of rushing into print in order to compete with the telephone lines and magazines which provide quick news services, but will maintain our tradition of publishing the definitive, reliable papers and summaries of carefully assessed records of British and European birds which have been the hallmark of *BB* for the past 87 years. EDS



Acknowledgments

As well as the many people who help *BB* in a whole variety of ways, many of whose names are listed on the inside front cover each month or within our subscription leaflets, we should like to thank the following, who waived all or part of their photographic or artistic fees in favour of *BB*:

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We apologise for any accidental oversight.

Occurrence patterns of rare passerines in Britain and Ireland



David T. Parkin and Alan G. Knox,
on behalf of the British Ornithologists'
Union Records Committee

In recent decades, there have been increasing numbers of records in Britain and Ireland of birds that have occurred vast distances outside their normal ranges. It is the difficult task of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC) and the Irish Rare Birds Committee to decide which of these have occurred naturally, rather than as a result of escape from captivity. The species involved may be divided into four groups:

1. Species that are unlikely candidates for vagrancy to Britain and Ireland, that are not held in captivity, and whose passage is unlikely to have been ship-assisted (e.g. Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus* and Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica*: Waldon 1994; Dixey *et al.* 1981). These species presumably arrived in Britain quite naturally, unless there are people who, for their own motives and quite illegally, are importing exotic species for subsequent release.
2. Species that are unlikely candidates for vagrancy to Britain and Ireland, that are not commonly held in captivity, and whose arrival may have been ship-assisted (e.g. Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* and Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*: Charlton in press; McKay 1994). Some of these have occurred close to seaports having regular trade with relevant parts of the world, and some individuals were even seen to fly off ships close to land or shortly after docking (e.g. Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*: Durand 1963). Unless there is direct evidence of human assistance, as with the Snowy Sheathbill *Chionis alba* brought to Plymouth from the Falkland Islands (*Brit. Birds* 75: 591), such species are currently eligible for admittance to Category A of the British & Irish List. Individuals known to have benefited from active human assistance (having been fed or sheltered) are excluded from Category A, but may be placed in Category D, which does not form part of the main list.
3. Species that are very unlikely or impossible natural vagrants to Britain and Ireland, and which are commonly kept in captivity in Britain or neighbouring countries (e.g. Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus* and Chiloe Wigeon *Anas*

sibilatrix). Such species are not admitted to the British & Irish List, unless it is proven that they now have feral breeding populations that are self-sustaining without recourse to further releases or escapes (e.g. Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* and Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*), in which case they are placed in category C, which does form part of the main list.

4. Species that are possible natural vagrants to Britain and Ireland, although they are also kept in captivity and may have escaped or been released.

This paper examines one aspect of the pattern of occurrence of this last group of potential rarities: the link with captivity. Statistical tests have been used to investigate differences in the pattern of occurrence with respect to season, normal range, diet and whether the species occurs in captivity in Britain.

Methods

For the purposes of this analysis, only passerine long-distance migrants have been considered. Of the main non-passerine groups, ducks and raptors have been omitted because of the frequency with which they occur in, and escape from, captivity. Waders and seabirds have been excluded since they are scarce in collections. The species included are all among those for which a full description is required for acceptance by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC), and the analysis has been further restricted to those species that can be considered as long-distance migrants and which breed in either North America or Asia. The distribution of the latter group has been taken from Harrison (1982). A total of 57 species is included in the analysis. The records used have been taken from Dymond *et al.* (1989) and subsequent reports (to October 1992) of the BBRC (published annually in *British Birds*) and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (published in *Ibis*). The data include all accepted records of the selected species, all records where the identification was accepted by the BBRC but doubt existed about the natural vagrancy, and a few records under consideration by the BOURC. Records that have not been published by the BBRC, or records that have not yet reached the BOURC, have been excluded.

To simplify the analysis, the species have been grouped into those which occurred in spring (the first sighting of each record was in April to July) or autumn (first seen in August to November), but not in both seasons. Species first reported in December to March have been considered to be wintering, and have been excluded.

An indication of the species' presence in captivity has been obtained from advertisements in the weekly aviculturists' newspaper *Cage and Aviary Birds* (CAB). This information was provided by T. P. Inskipp (Secretary of the BOURC) who, for the past 20 years, has maintained extensive records of species offered for sale and their changing prices. He kindly advised which of the 57 species under consideration have been offered for sale or exchange at least once since 1970. It should be emphasised that this information takes no account of additional species known to be involved in the cage-bird trade in mainland Europe, and will probably exclude some species that are held in captivity in Britain and/or Ireland, but have never been offered for sale here.

It is also possible that occasional relevant advertisements were overlooked. None of these factors should profoundly affect the results.

The complete data are presented in Appendix 1, where a comparison is made between species from North America and those from Asia, the season of occurrence in Britain and Ireland, and whether or not they have been advertised in *CAB*. Species such as Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* have been omitted because they breed west of the Ural Mountains, and others, such as White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* and Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, because they have been recorded in spring or winter, as well as autumn.

We have included a further variable in the analysis: diet. Certain species or families are easier to keep in captivity, and hence are commoner cage-birds. For example, seed-eaters tend to be more popular than insectivores. In Appendix 1, the diet of the species is also indicated as primarily insectivorous (e.g. flycatchers, warblers), granivorous (finches, buntings, sparrows) or mixed (starlings, thrushes, chats), here called 'omnivorous' for convenience.

Results

There are clear differences in both advertising pattern and season of occurrence among species with different diets (tables 1a & 1b)¹. Of the species listed, a higher proportion of the granivores occurs in spring than is the case for either the omnivores or the insectivores, both of which are commoner in autumn. Also, granivores are much more likely to be advertised than omnivores. Insectivores are rarely offered for sale.

Table 1. Occurrence patterns of rare passerines in Britain originating from North America and Asia

Table 1a shows the number of each dietary class occurring in spring and autumn; table 1b shows the number advertised and not advertised for sale in avicultural magazines. Data from Appendix 1. For further details, see text

1a. Both Regions

Season of occurrence	Granivore	Omnivore	Insectivore
Spring	11	5	5
Autumn	5	8	23

1b. Both Regions

Whether offered for sale	Granivore	Omnivore	Insectivore
Advertised	13	8	2
Not advertised	3	5	26

Pooling the data from North America and from Asia like this does, however, mask a difference between them. The relevant figures for the two regions are shown separately according to season of occurrence (table 2) and advertising status (table 3). Comparison of the data for North America and for Asia (tables 2a & 2b) shows a significant difference between them², so the data are heterogeneous and the regions must be analysed separately, despite the smallness of the sample sizes.

¹ All superscript numerals refer to Appendix 2, where statistical details are noted.

Table 2. Data from table 1a partitioned by region of origin
For further details, see text

<i>2a. North America</i>			
Season of occurrence	Granivore	Omnivore	Insectivore
Spring	8	1	4
Autumn	3	8	16

<i>2b. Asia</i>			
Season of occurrence	Granivore	Omnivore	Insectivore
Spring	3	4	1
Autumn	2	0	7

For each region (tables 2a & 2b), we have tested to see whether the seasonal pattern of occurrence is the same in the three dietary groups.³ This reveals that the pattern is different for the two regions⁴. Looking at the North American species more closely, a higher proportion of granivores occurs in the spring than for either the omnivores⁵ or the insectivores⁶. The latter two groups do not differ in their pattern⁷. Among the Asian species, a significantly higher proportion of omnivores occurs in spring compared with the insectivores⁸. The proportion for spring granivores does not differ significantly from that for either of the other two groups, although, like omnivores, they occur more in spring.

Turning to the pattern of advertising, we have repeated the above analysis³. For North American species (table 3a), the proportion of advertised birds differs among the three dietary groups⁵. It is striking that no insectivores have been offered for sale, contrasting markedly with 82% of granivores and 55% of omnivores. Among the Asiatic species (table 3b), the frequency of advertising is almost identical for granivores and omnivores; as with the North American data, it is significantly lower for insectivores (25%).

Table 3. Data from table 1b partitioned by region of origin
For further details, see text

<i>3a. North America</i>			
Whether offered for sale	Granivore	Omnivore	Insectivore
Advertised	9	5	0
Not advertised	2	4	20

<i>3b. Asia</i>			
Whether offered for sale	Granivore	Omnivore	Insectivore
Advertised	4	3	2
Not advertised	1	1	6

Discussion

To summarise these results, among the bird species listed in Appendix 1, North American granivores are significantly commoner in spring than in autumn. North American omnivores and insectivores, on the other hand, are more often recorded in autumn. Most of the North American granivore

species that have occurred in Britain have been offered for sale here, just over half of the omnivores have, but none of the insectivores has.

The pattern among Asiatic species seems to be slightly different, but is less clear because the numbers are smaller. Insectivores still predominate in the autumn, whereas granivores and omnivores are more often recorded in spring, the latter significantly so. Advertising closely parallels the pattern for North American birds.

In general, granivores and insectivores show the same pattern in the two regional data sets: the granivores are more likely to be advertised, and occur more often in spring; insectivores are rarely (if ever) advertised, and occur predominantly in autumn. Asiatic omnivores seem to resemble granivores in their more frequent occurrence in spring and with a higher proportion being advertised. American omnivores predominate in the autumn, and just over half of the species have been offered for sale.

While correlation is not causation, it is worth seeking an underlying reason for the apparent association between advertising and occurrence in the cases of insectivores and granivores. It seems reasonable to assume that most of the non-advertised species are of natural origin (although some may have escaped from captivity on the Continent, or been deliberately released because they were illegal—or difficult—to keep or sell). Their pattern of occurrence, with most (26 out of 34 species) occurring in autumn, fits well with expectations based upon our knowledge of bird migration (see references in Berthold 1991). Many species disperse at the end of the breeding season. Although this is usually relatively local, birds are very mobile, and it is perhaps not surprising that some individuals should stray hundreds or thousands of kilometres from their natal areas.

Of those vagrants which have been aged, the majority are birds of the year undertaking their first migration. In the BBRC Reports for 1990 and 1991 (Rogers *et al.* 1991, 1992), 33 out of 34 and 34 out of 38 aged passerines recorded between August and October are listed as first-winter or juvenile. Experimental work has revealed that passerine night migrants—and this includes most of the species considered here—show age-dependent differences in migratory strategy (see Berthold 1991). Adult birds, having visited their wintering grounds at least once before, use complex navigational techniques, possibly also following learned landmarks, to complete their migration. Naive juveniles that migrate alone are supported only by an instinctive ability to fly in a particular direction. Their migration is thus more of a 'course and distance' procedure. Such inexperienced birds might easily overshoot the eastern seaboard of North America and be carried across the Atlantic Ocean by fast-moving weather systems. The arrival of vagrants from Asia is less easy to explain. It has been suggested that, because of an error in physiology or behaviour, some individuals might orientate in the opposite direction to that in which they 'should' be going, leading them to northwest Europe rather than southeast Asia. Whether from North America or the east, it is unlikely that many of these vagrants successfully reorientate to winter in the 'correct' areas. Indeed, a plausible case may be made for spring occurrences, especially of non-advertised (presumably vagrant) species, being strays from the previous autumn that have wintered successfully in the Western Palearctic or Africa.

If escape is independent of season (we have reasons for believing that it is not, but currently have no means of quantifying this), then approximately equal proportions would be expected in spring and autumn. It is striking that over half (13 out of 23, 57%) of the advertised species have occurred in spring, compared with one-third of the species that have not been advertised (8 out of 34, 34%), and this difference is statistically very significant⁵. While it is possible to construct explanations based upon differences in migratory patterns, it could be suggested that this is just the pattern that would be expected if the records of advertised species were all escapes.

A case could be made for not accepting any records of species that have ever been held in captivity. This seems rather draconian, and would undoubtedly lead to the rejection of a number of genuine vagrants. The BOURC will, however, continue to look very closely at those species that turn up in Britain and are currently included in the upsurge in importations from China and the former USSR. The present practice of the BOURC of placing records of doubtful or uncertain origin into category D will continue, as this encourages the gathering of records and further information which may then be reviewed from time to time.

Meanwhile, birders are encouraged to submit detailed records of all exotics to their county recorders. Recorders are urged to publish acceptable records in their local reports. Collation of these data on a national scale is already being investigated by the Association of County Recorders and Editors (ACRE). It would be extremely valuable to have a representative data set of obvious escapes, such as Canaries *Serinus canaria*, or African and Australian seed-eaters. Knowing the pattern of occurrence in time and space of birds that have certainly escaped or been released from captivity would greatly facilitate the task of assessing the status of those that might have arrived here more or less naturally.

It should be noted that this analysis does not take into account the bird trade in continental Europe, the commonness of a particular species in captivity or in the wild, migration strategies or a variety of other relevant factors. Nevertheless, the emerging patterns are quite clear: granivorous birds are advertised for sale more often than are insectivores, and occur more often in spring than in autumn. Non-advertised species (mainly insectivores and North American omnivores) appear far more often in autumn than in spring. The most tempting interpretation is that the rarest, long-distance, passerine vagrants occur naturally almost exclusively in the autumn, and that spring birds may be escapes. Such conclusions would, however, be premature, and further work is needed to examine alternative explanations.

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Summary

Records of 57 long-distance vagrants and potential vagrants to Britain and Ireland from North America and Asia are analysed, and related to their diets, seasons of occurrence and whether they have been advertised for sale in Britain. Striking differences exist which suggest that many of the spring records should be viewed with caution. Birders are urged to submit, and editors to publish, all records of exotics (especially wildfowl, raptors and passerines) to assist with an assessment of seasonal and geographic patterns of occurrence.

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Appendix 1. Species included in analysis

Also shown are the diets (Ins = insectivore, Omn = omnivore, Grn = granivore), region of origin (North America or Asia), season of occurrence (spring or autumn) and whether advertised for sale in *Cage and Aviary Birds* (Yes = advertised)

Species	Diet	Origin	Season	Advertised
Eastern Phoebe <i>Sayornis phoebe</i>	Ins	N Am	Spr	—
Tree Swallow <i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	Ins	N Am	Spr	—
Cliff Swallow <i>Hirundo pyrrhonota</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Blyth's Pipit <i>Anthus godlewskii</i>	Ins	Asia	Aut	—
Cedar Waxwing <i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	Omn	N Am	Spr	Yes
Brown Thrasher <i>Toxostoma rufum</i>	Omn	N Am	Aut	—
Grey Catbird <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>	Omn	N Am	Aut	—
White-throated Robin <i>Irania gutturalis</i>	Omn	Asia	Spr	—
Daurian Redstart <i>Phoenicurus aureoreus</i>	Omn	Asia	Spr	Yes
Varied Thrush <i>Zoothera narvia</i>	Omn	N Am	Aut	Yes
Wood Thrush <i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>	Omn	N Am	Aut	—
Grey-checked Thrush <i>Catharus minimus</i>	Omn	N Am	Aut	—
Veery <i>C. fuscescens</i>	Omn	N Am	Aut	Yes
Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler <i>Locustella certhiola</i>	Ins	Asia	Aut	—
Thick-billed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus aedon</i>	Ins	Asia	Aut	—
Pallas's Leaf Warbler <i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>	Ins	Asia	Aut	—

Species (continued)	Diet	*Origin	Season	Advertised
Radde's Warbler <i>P. schwarzi</i>	Ins	Asia	Aut	—
Asian Brown Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	Ins	Asia	Spr	—
Mugimaki Flycatcher <i>Ficedula mugimaki</i>	Ins	Asia	Aut	Yes
Brown Shrike <i>Lanius cristatus</i>	Ins	Asia	Aut	Yes
Daurian Starling <i>Sturnus sturninus</i>	Omn	Asia	Spr	Yes
White-checked Starling <i>S. cineraceus</i>	Omn	Asia	Spr	Yes
Yellow-throated Vireo <i>Vireo flavifrons</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Philadelphia Vireo <i>V. philadelphicus</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Red-eyed Vireo <i>V. olivaceus</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Red-fronted Serin <i>Serinus pusillus</i>	Grn	Asia	Spr	Yes
Pallas's Rosefinch <i>Carpodacus roseus</i>	Grn	Asia	Spr	Yes
Evening Grosbeak <i>Hesperiphona vespertina</i>	Grn	N Am	Spr	Yes
Tennessee Warbler <i>Vermivora peregrina</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Northern Parula <i>Parula americana</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Yellow Warbler <i>Dendroica petechia</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Chestnut-sided Warbler <i>D. pensylvanica</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Blackburnian Warbler <i>D. fusca</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Cape May Warbler <i>D. tigrina</i>	Ins	N Am	Spr	—
Magnolia Warbler <i>D. magnolia</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Palm Warbler <i>D. palmarum</i>	Ins	N Am	Spr	—
Blackpoll Warbler <i>D. striata</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
American Redstart <i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Ovenbird <i>Seiurus aurocapillus</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Northern Waterthrush <i>S. noveboracensis</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Hooded Warbler <i>Wilsonia citrina</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Wilson's Warbler <i>W. pusilla</i>	Ins	N Am	Aut	—
Summer Tanager <i>Piranga rubra</i>	Omn	N Am	Aut	Yes
Scarlet Tanager <i>P. olivacea</i>	Omn	N Am	Aut	Yes
Rufous-sided Towhee <i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i>	Grn	N Am	Spr	Yes
Lark Sparrow <i>Chondestes grammacus</i>	Grn	N Am	Spr	—
Fox Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia iliaca</i>	Grn	N Am	Spr	Yes
Song Sparrow <i>Z. melodia</i>	Grn	N Am	Spr	—
White-crowned Sparrow <i>Z. leucophrys</i>	Grn	N Am	Spr	Yes
Yellow-browed Bunting <i>Emberiza chrysophrys</i>	Grn	Asia	Aut	Yes
Chestnut Bunting <i>E. rutila</i>	Grn	Asia	Spr	Yes
Indigo Bunting <i>Passerina cyanea</i>	Grn	N Am	Aut	Yes
Lazuli Bunting <i>P. amoena</i>	Grn	N Am	Aut	Yes
Painted Bunting <i>P. ciris</i>	Grn	N Am	Spr	Yes
Bobolink <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	Grn	N Am	Aut	Yes
Brown-headed Cowbird <i>Molothrus ater</i>	Grn	N Am	Spr	Yes

Appendix 2. Statistical tests and results

1. Table 1a, heterogeneity estimated as $\chi^2 = 11.4$, d.f. = 2, $p < 0.01$.

Table 1b, heterogeneity estimated as $\chi^2 = 26.4$, d.f. = 2, $p < 0.01$.

2. Heterogeneity among tables estimated using a log-linear model for the analysis of multi-dimensional contingency tables (Sokal & Rohlf 1981). Estimate of heterogeneity given as $G = 12.4$, d.f. = 2, $p < 0.01$.

3. Using a modification of Fisher's exact test (Wells & King 1981).

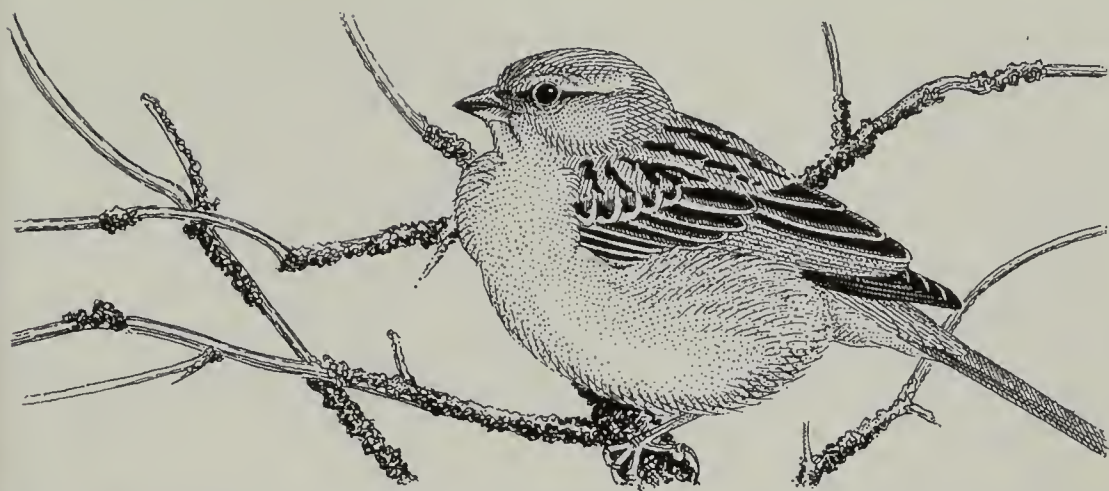
4. $p < 0.02$ in both cases

5. $p < 0.01$

6. $p < 0.02$

7. $p < 0.37$

8. $p < 0.01$



Studies of West Palearctic birds

193. House Sparrow*

J. Denis Summers-Smith

The House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* must be one of the most familiar birds, not only in the Palearctic and Oriental Regions that are its natural range, but also in much of the rest of the world into which the species has been introduced and where it has thrived most successfully. Its familiarity depends on the fact that throughout very much of its range it is closely associated with man, nesting on his houses and feeding on grain, animal feedstuffs and scraps provided by man in towns and gardens.

Not only is the House Sparrow familiar to anyone interested in birds (and even to those who are not), but it is also one of the most studied. This is partly because it is considered a pest species in many parts of its range, and also because, being unprotected, it has been used as a laboratory animal or even 'sacrificed' without causing undue concern. It has been the subject of a monograph (Summers-Smith 1963) and was treated at length in a more recent study of the genus (Summers-Smith 1988); it is the dominant species within the occasional journal *International Studies on Sparrows* and in four books emanating from the Polish Academy of Sciences (Kendeigh & Pinowski 1973; Pinowski & Kendeigh 1977; Pinowski & Summers-Smith 1990; Pinowski *et al.* 1991). A symposium was devoted to North American studies on the species (in Fayetteville, Arkansas, in 1969: Hardy & Morton 1973); it was the subject of another symposium, at the XVII International Ornithological Congress in 1978; and, more recently, received full treatment in *Birds of North America* (Lowther & Cink 1992). In this review, therefore, I propose to concentrate on those aspects of special current interest that I consider worth highlighting.

Taxonomy

The House Sparrow does not present identification problems, certainly not the male with his dark grey crown, chestnut nape, white cheeks, and black

*This paper, and others in this long-running *British Birds* series, will be published in a forthcoming HarperCollins book.

chin and bib, though the dull brown female is less distinguished. The same, however, cannot be said about its taxonomy. Linnaeus in his *Systema Naturae* of 1758 described it as a finch *Fringilla domestica* (the Latin *fringilla* probably referred to the Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*). Brisson changed the genus to *Passer* in 1760, though still retaining it in the finch family Fringillidae. In 1927, *Passer* was moved by Sushkin to the weaverbirds (family Ploceidae), both on anatomical grounds and because of its nest architecture, though not with universal acceptance. Although the nests built by the sparrows are domed, they tend to be loose untidy heaps, bearing little resemblance to the beautifully constructed nests of the ploceine weavers. The final contribution to this saga comes from the protein and DNA analysis studies of Sibley and his co-workers, who seem to veer between placing the sparrows in a new family Passeridae, together with the related rock sparrows *Petronia* and snowfinches *Montifringilla*, or as a subfamily, Passerinae, in the Passeridae, which includes among others the weavers in the subfamily Ploceinae (Sibley & Ahlquist 1990; Sibley & Monroe 1990). It seems clear that there is no general agreement on the relationship between the sparrows and the other great seed-eating groups: the finches, the weavers and the buntings.

One other taxonomic problem remains: the relationship between the House Sparrow and the Spanish (or Willow) Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*. Over much of their ranges, these two birds live separately as good species, but in northwest Africa they interbreed freely, forming a complete range of intermediates; whereas in Italy, south from the Alps to about the latitude of Rome, there is a stabilised hybrid, the so-called Italian Sparrow, intermediate in plumage between the two, and from there southwards to Pantelleria there is a steady cline from the pure Italian Sparrow type to pure *hispaniolensis*. Are we dealing with one species or two separate ones? Our taxonomic rules do not easily cope with this problem, though I tend to support the view 'that as the hybrid population has resulted from events long past, and is currently stable with little inflow from the parent species, the taxon might well be given specific rank' (Johnston 1969). Confirmed tickers will surely agree.

Origins

The most striking character of the House Sparrow, as already mentioned, is its close association with man. All the sparrows are seed-eaters, taking especially the seeds of grasses, and it seems likely that this association between the House Sparrow and man originated in the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East where man evolved, about 10,000 years ago, from a hunter-gatherer to a settled agriculturist, cultivating the wild wheat and barley that were the precursors of our present cereal grains and were no doubt already part of the diet of the sparrow inhabiting those parts. Not only did this association provide a source of food, both in the fields and in the feedstuffs put out for man's domestic stock, but, in addition, man's dwellings provided good, safe nest sites. Provision of an assured food supply throughout the year enabled the House Sparrow to adopt a completely sedentary way of life, many individuals, as shown by ringing results, nowadays living out their lives no more than a kilometre or two from their birthplace. As we shall see later, this has important effects on its life style and behaviour. It is worth pointing out,



171. Adult male House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* drinking, Kent, June 1989 (R. J. Chandler). Note jet-black breeding-season bill colour

172. Male House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Scilly, autumn 1983 (Robin Chittenden). Note grey/horn/yellowish out-of-breeding-season bill colour. Extensive black bib is masked by pale tips, which will have been abraded by spring to create the full black chin, throat and upper breast of the male in the breeding season



however, that such extreme sedentary behaviour is by no means always the case. Two races are migratory: *P. d. bactrianus*, which breeds in Afghanistan and Russian Turkestan, winters in northern Pakistan and India, with ringing recoveries showing movements of 1,500-2,000 km; *P. d. parkini*, which breeds above 2,000 m in the Karakorams and Himalayas, is largely migratory, descending to lower altitudes in the winter.

In the breeding range of *bactrianus*, the sedentary Tree Sparrow *P. montanus* has pre-empted the 'house sparrow' role (as it does in those parts of the East where the House Sparrow does not occur) and lives in the towns and villages, whereas the migratory House Sparrow is forced out into open country, where it breeds away from man in holes in cliffs and embankments. Close association with man, however, remains the rule, and has been exploited by the species to an extraordinary degree. House Sparrows are able to survive the long winter nights north of the Arctic Circle by moving into the byres with the cattle, where the cold is mitigated and food is readily available. Other House Sparrows, such as those that used to occupy the air-conditioned Queen's Building at London's Heathrow Airport when it was the main passenger terminal and the ones that bred in Frickley Colliery (Summers-Smith 1980), provisioned by the miners 640 m below ground level, have completely forsaken a natural outdoor environment.

Range

The natural range of the House Sparrow extends from the western seaboard of Europe east to the Pacific coast of Siberia, with a dramatic extension of some 5,500 km from the Urals to the mouth of the river Amur in a little over 100 years following the development of agriculture and the building of the Trans-Siberian railway. In the south, it extends to North Africa north of the Sahara, through the Middle East to the Indian peninsula and Sri Lanka and just into northern Burma. It is lacking in Thailand, Indo-China, China, just penetrating Heilungkiang Province in the extreme north, and Japan, though there is one record of a male and two young in northwest Hokkaido in August 1990 (Sano 1990).

The range has been greatly extended by deliberate introductions by man to most of the major inhabited parts of the world, including North and South America, southern Africa, Australia and New Zealand, in all of which it has spread very successfully. It would take too long to describe all of the colonisations, though some are particularly worthy of note. Perhaps the most interesting is the situation that is developing at the junction between North and South America. House Sparrows from the North were first reported from Panama in 1976 (Reynolds & Stiles 1982), whereas in the South they were in Amazonia in 1965 (Müller 1967) and in Colombia in 1986 (C. Hinkelmann verbally). Venezuela remains unconquered, though House Sparrows are already close by, on Curaçao, having escaped from an aviary there in 1953 (Voous 1983), and invasions from north and south can surely not be long delayed and the two populations, both originally from western Europe, will meet up again after a separation of nearly 150 years. During this time, the two populations have been evolving along different evolutionary lines and interbreeding should provide fruitful material for DNA studies.

Although these major introductions were at the hand of man, there are many instances of unaided spread, probably mostly by involuntary ship-borne invaders. The best-recorded instance is the colonisation of the Falkland Islands in 1919 by about 20 House Sparrows that travelled aboard four whaling vessels from Montevideo in Uruguay (Bennett 1926), and this method probably also accounted for the colonisation of the Cape Verdes that occurred between 1922 and 1924 (Bourne 1966), the Faroes in 1934 or 1935, and Senegal about 1970. Sparrows with grey heads have recently been reported among the introduced population of Spanish Sparrows on Madeira, though nothing is known of their provenance or mode of arrival. With a recent report of the introduced sparrows on the Azores travelling between the islands on the inter-island planes (G. Le Grand verbally), nothing seems beyond the capacity of this intrepid bird.

Breeding

The extreme sedentary way of life has allowed the House Sparrow to form pairs that are maintained for life. One pair of my colour-ringed population remained together for four years, raising at least seven broods in the same nest. Recent studies, however, suggest that perhaps all is not as it appears on the surface. DNA investigations have shown that 10% to 20% of the chicks in nests have not been sired by the male attending the nest (Parkin & Wetton 1991; Wetton & Parkin 1991a). The female successfully conceals this from human observers—Wetton & Parkin (1991b) observed only one extra-pair copulation in 58 cases, whereas they found 73 extra-pair fertilisations out of 536—and no doubt from her mate as well, to ensure his faithful co-operation in raising the young, though cloaca-pecking and the repeated and frequent copulations observed at the nest suggest that the male may be aware of the risk of being duped. But there are even more bizarre happenings. In a study in Spain, it was suggested that widowed birds would destroy the eggs or young in a neighbouring nest to induce the bird of the appropriate sex to desert and pair with the murderer (Veiga 1990), preferring the replacement to be an experienced bird rather than a non-breeding floater! Are we becoming too obsessed with sex? The observations of those who have studied House Sparrows intensively in the field do not seem to be consistent with the views of their sex-oriented colleagues.

Remaining in the same area throughout the year allows the House Sparrow to take advantage of the opportunity to start breeding early and to extend the breeding season as long as conditions remain favourable, without having to take into consideration the need to migrate. Three broods are not uncommon in temperate regions, and up to seven attempts, including four successful ones, have occurred in one year in the Indian tropics, breeding being interrupted only by the energetic demands of the moult (Naik & Mistry 1980).

The adaptability of the species is shown by its catholic choice of nest sites. Holes in buildings and other man-made structures (street lights are a regular site, the birds no doubt benefiting from the central heating) are the commonest sites, but natural cliff holes are also used, and nests are frequently built openly in the branches of trees or on telegraph poles, the habit being more frequent in the warmer Mediterranean region than at higher latitudes.



173. Two female House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* fighting, North Yorkshire, March 1992 (*E. A. Jones*). While such fighting between two individuals of the same sex can often be seen during the breeding season, fights between the two sexes almost never occur

174. Female House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* bathing, Kent, June 1989 (*R. J. Chandler*). Bathing and dust-bathing are frequent activities throughout the year



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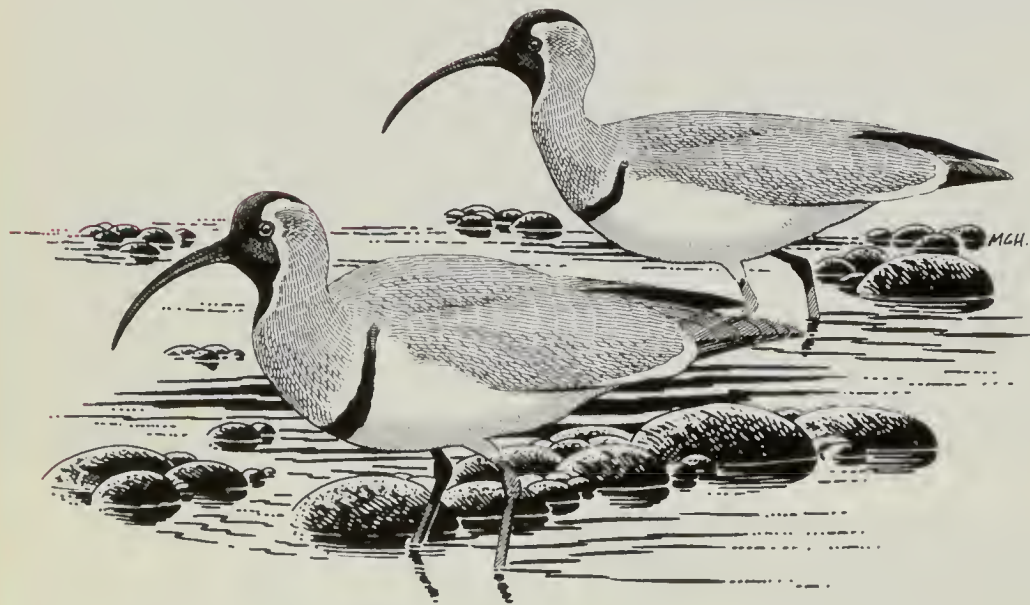
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Again, it is the bizarre that attracts interest. Moving sites are not uncommon; these usually involve only limited movement, such as occurred on the 'nodding donkeys' in an oilfield in Kansas, USA, and on a coke-oven ram-machine in a steel-works in south Wales, but pairs have also nested on more mobile sites. There is a case of a pair that nested on a house boat on the Nile, staying with it as it made journeys of up to 30 km (Meinertzhagen 1949); while another pair nested under the bonnet of a gamekeeper's van that made regular trips around an estate during the day (*Middlesbrough Evening Gazette*, 18th May 1966).

Numbers

It is generally accepted that a noticeable decrease in House Sparrow numbers occurred in urban areas in the UK and North America in the 1920s. This was attributed to the replacement of the horse by the automobile that not only reduced the availability of food from spillage from nosebags, but also made the streets a more dangerous place because of the increasing speed of the vehicles. After a period of relative stability, if not of increase in numbers, with the growth of the suburban areas much to the liking of the sparrows, we now seem to be in the middle of another period of decline.

Census results have indicated a strong decrease in House Sparrows in Denmark during 1977-79, with similar falls in both the UK and Sweden starting in the early 1980s (Marchant *et al.* 1990). Confirmation of the UK decrease is given by censuses carried out by Lewis (1984) in an area of the Berkshire Downs in 1967 and repeated in 1981; the census for the latter year showed a marked drop in breeding numbers and the almost complete disappearance of autumn passage that had been a feature of the earlier survey. Further evidence is given by the Common Birds Census organised by the British Trust for Ornithology, showing a decline of 15-20% over the period 1978-88 (Balmer & Marchant 1993), though it should be noted that this refers particularly to farmland, which, as Heij (1985) has shown, is not the primary habitat for the House Sparrow and is thus likely to exaggerate the situation (see below). This decline appears to be widespread over much of western Europe; for example, transect counts around Lake Constance show a 22% decrease in the decade 1980/81 to 1990/91 (Bauer & Heine 1992).

The remaining evidence is rather more anecdotal in character, but nonetheless very convincing, as it comes independently from several different countries. In the Netherlands, a decrease in breeding numbers was reported from Renkum, Gelderland, in 1980 (Woldendorp 1981), and in 1982 it was noted that House Sparrows were in sharp decline in the Faroe Islands (Bloch 1982). In the UK, several participants in the Garden Bird Feeding Survey organised by the BTO remarked on a decline or even complete absence of House Sparrows in their gardens in 1989 (Muirhead 1989), while a correspondent to one of the national newspapers noted a dearth of House Sparrows in parts of Suffolk in 1991 (Burton 1991). Brucker (1993) remarked that the population of the House Sparrow in the Oxfordshire countryside, high in the 1940s, had recently plummeted to a comparatively low level. Further, seven out of nine correspondents to *British Birds* in 1993 reported a significant decrease (Sharrock 1993; Balmer & Marchant 1993).

I have found from personal observations in northeast England that a number of the more isolated breeding colonies have disappeared in recent years. In the vicinity of farmhouses, where there used to be flocks of 20-30, there are now fewer than ten. House Sparrows ceased breeding around my house in County Cleveland in the 1970s, and the erection of a sparrow pot on the wall of the house in 1981 has failed to persuade them to return. In fact, House Sparrows are now only rare visitors to my garden, in some years being outnumbered even by Hawfinches *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*! We may also ask what has happened to the large flocks at the ripening grain fields that used to be such a feature at the edges of built-up areas in the late summer.

Finally, from Germany there is a most interesting account in a rather unlikely source, an article entitled 'Unser Spatz piepst das Lied von Tod' (Our spuggy peeps the song of death) in the popular magazine *Bunte* (Dröschner 1992). The author remarks that the House Sparrow has become a rarity in West Berlin, though it is still common in East Berlin. He suggests that the underlying reason for this difference is the absence of insects in the more affluent west, through the widespread use of garden pesticides, whereas in the east little of this occurs as yet.

The species thus appears to be in decline over much of western Europe from Scandinavia to Belgium and Britain. Taking everything into consideration, I suggest that the population in the British Isles peaked at about 11.5 million from 1981 to 1984 and has now probably fallen to less than 9 million.

I can only speculate on some possible reasons for the decline. A Dutch study, in which comparative observations were made in urban, suburban and agricultural areas in and around Rotterdam (Heij 1985), provides a useful starting point. In general, the House Sparrows were most successful in the 'green' suburban area, where the population was self-sustaining. In contrast, both the urban and rural areas were less successful and depended on immigration for the maintenance of numbers.

While the House Sparrow is essentially a granivore, the young are reared principally on invertebrates, a diet of animal food for the first three days at least being essential for survival. Older chicks are still given animal food, but this can be increasingly supplemented by vegetable food as they approach fledging. A restricted availability of insects may always have had a limiting effect on the breeding success of urban populations, but may now be having an effect on suburban and rural populations as well, owing to increased use of pesticides both on agricultural land and in suburban gardens. Changing farming practices may be having an additional effect in agricultural areas. The latter includes reduction in the diversity of the vegetation: production of weed-free crops, removal of hedgerows and the ploughing-up of headlands. In addition to the effect of reduced invertebrate availability on productivity, the disappearance of the barnyard fowl from many farmyards and the change from spring-sown to autumn-sown cereal cultivation must have reduced the availability of food throughout the year and have exerted pressure on the survival of the full-grown birds.

Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* and domestic cats are effective predators of House Sparrows. For example, Churcher & Lawton (1987), who made a study of the

prey taken by cats in an English village, came to the conclusion that 'domestic cats were a significant, perhaps even the most important, source of mortality for house sparrows in the village'. This must apply equally to suburban areas, where cats are numerous. No doubt sparrow populations were in equilibrium with this pressure, and there is no evidence to suggest any change in this situation that could account for the decline in sparrow numbers. Predation pressure on suburban House Sparrows has, however, probably mounted through the increase in numbers of Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus*, now a familiar member of the suburban avifauna that dramatically increased in numbers following the withdrawal of the organochlorine pesticides (Marchant *et al.* 1990). While not important by itself, this could be an additional factor leading to a new equilibrium at a lower population level.

Relations with Tree Sparrows

In the Far East, where the House Sparrow is absent, the Tree Sparrow takes over the 'house sparrow' role, living in close association with man in exactly the way that the House Sparrow does in Europe. The two species are thus potential competitors in areas where they overlap. The larger House Sparrow is normally dominant, although, as already mentioned, the Tree Sparrow retains the domestic role in Afghanistan and Russian Turkestan, where the House Sparrow is a summer visitor. At the limit of the House Sparrow's range in Assam, however, both species live together around man's buildings, and to the south in Burma the Tree Sparrow becomes the dominant house bird, with the House Sparrow displaced to more rural areas.

With two species adapted to the same ecological niche, there must be a risk of interbreeding, and it seems most likely that the adoption of the 'male' plumage by the female Tree Sparrow has evolved as a species-isolating mechanism. If this is the case, it is not entirely successful. In a study of hybridisation between the species, Cordero & Summers-Smith (1993) were able to cite 33 instances (since then increased to 47). We came to the conclusion that mate restriction was the most likely cause of hybridisation, where one or even both of the species were locally rare and individuals had difficulty in finding a mate of their own species; in the absence of a proper mate, a male House Sparrow would mate with a female Tree Sparrow, even though it would look 'wrong', and vice versa. In most of the cases investigated, the rarer species was the Tree Sparrow, though in one case both were uncommon. The hybrids appear to be not only viable, but also fertile and capable of breeding, indicating that the two species are genetically very closely related.

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Young Ornithologists of the Year

Entrants had to submit their field notebooks, and these arrived: some held together by string or by sellotape, and others mud-bespattered; some barely decipherable, with handwriting obviously intended to be read only by the writer, others neatly written as if by an accountant; but all revealing dedication.

The judges assembled at 'Fountains' for a day of perusal and discussion. For two members of the judging panel, it was nostalgia time, for BAEM and JTRS had, in their youth, both been winners of precursors of this competition; indeed, BAEM had brought with him his notebooks from the mid 1950s, which—after the judging was over—provided interesting comparison with this year's winning notebooks.

The entries were assessed separately for each age-group, starting with the youngest. The judges constantly drew each other's attentions to good points, bad points, amusing bits, mistakes made (well, we all do it sometimes), or mistakes admitted (a plus point, unless apparently contrived for our benefit). It was a lively day! The six judges really enjoyed their task, each of them assessing the notebooks from a different viewpoint, and after independent voting (scoring each entrant out of 10) clear winners emerged in each age-group.

Winners of the title Young Ornithologists of the Year 1994 are as follows:

SENIOR **Stephen Votier** (Cromer, Norfolk)

(21 & under)

INTERMEDIATE **Simon Patient** (Maldon, Essex)

(16 and under)

JUNIOR **Jonathan Dean** (St Andrews, Fife)

(12 & under)

Runners-up: the judges were also very impressed by three other entries and wished to congratulate Tom Fieldsend (junior age-group), Dominic Sargent and Oscar Campbell (both in senior age-group), each of whom achieved scores of 80% or more of that of the winner in their age-group.

The flavour of the judges' deliberations can be given by quoting a few of their observations:

JONATHAN DEAN 'As good as many adults' notebooks'; 'They have a good "feel"—he clearly looks at things carefully'; 'He's got a careful and scientific approach'; 'Good stuff! He admits his mistakes, he's clearly still learning, but they are genuine field notes; there are rarities, but he's also carefully watching

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Kingfishers and looking at cetaceans and newts, for instance'; 'Simple drawings, but some good notes; very thorough.' Scores 9 8 8 8 6 6, average 7.5

SIMON PATIENT 'Good study of his local area, with tiny drawings catching each species' jizz very well indeed'; 'Super drawings—but perhaps not wholly a field notebook, for some writing seems to have been added in later'; 'A good artist, careful observations, and a good knowledge of natural history'; 'Lots of lively illustrations to actual field observations, obviously an active conservationist, with wide interests. Good stuff!' Scores 8 8 7 6 6 6, average 6.8

STEPHEN VOTIER 'I gave him 10 out of 10 because I don't think it could be bettered: a clear passion for what he's doing—a lot about Starling movements and Lapwings, for instance, as well as a lot of *precise* sketches and drawings of rare birds . . . very good knowledge . . . not much about behaviour, but lots on migration, and he's a "local-patch man" which is much to his credit . . . a clear winner'; 'Very meticulous'; 'Very good, but rather too much emphasis on identification for me'; 'I veered between 9 and 10 but settled on 9 because of the emphasis on identification almost to the exclusion of anything else, but the artwork and his general approach is of an exceedingly high standard'; 'A *real* notebook! High artistic ability and good ID points . . . not much on behaviour, but the sort of notebook work which a real birder of his age and his ability with his particular interests *ought* to be producing.'

Scores 10 9 8 8 7 4, average 7.7

The quality of the three winners' notebooks ensured the judges' enthusiasm for their task, and all six agreed to be judges again next year, for the 1995 competition. (Potential entrants please note that the rules will be slightly modified: see below.)

Acknowledgments

We are most grateful to the 11 sponsors of this competition—J. Barbour & Sons Ltd, the British Trust for Ornithology, Christopher Helm Publishers Ltd, the Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, *Kōwa* telescopes, Oxford University Press, Pan Macmillan Ltd, The Pica Press, T. & A. D. Poyser, and Swarovski UK Ltd—who have provided the prizes for the three winners and also financial assistance towards the administrative costs. We are also most grateful for the support of the Society of Wildlife Artists, the British Trust for Ornithology, the Young Ornithologists' Club, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the British Birds Rarities Committee and the British Ornithologists' Union. We are also grateful to the BTO for agreeing to host the award ceremony at its annual December Conference.

J. T. R. SHARROCK (BB), ROBERT GILLMOR (SWLA),
J. J. D. GREENWOOD (BTO), PETER HOLDEN (YOC),
ROB HUME (BBRC) and B. A. E. MARR (BOU)
c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Young Ornithologists of the Year 1995 For next year, entrants should submit not only their field notebook, but also *any notes written up afterwards*, both relating to the period January to 15th August 1995. The closing date will be *1st September 1995*. Please note the additional requirement and the earlier closing date.

Scarce migrants in Britain and Ireland



Part 2. Numbers during 1986-92: gulls to passerines

P. A. Fraser and J. F. Ryan

This paper continues the preliminary listing of British & Irish records of 'sub-rarities': mostly those species which were formerly assessed by the British Birds Rarities Committee* but became too frequent still to be classed as rare birds, and some others which fall into the same general category.

This series of papers follows the patterns of collation and analysis of records of less-common migrants and semi-rarities started by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*Brit. Birds* 62: 169-189, 300-315; 63: 6-23, 313-324; 64: 93-113, 302-309; 65: 187-202, 381-392; 66: 46-64, 517-525; collected together in *Scarce Migrant Birds in Britain and Ireland*, 1974) and continued by J. N. Dymond, P. A. Fraser and S. J. M. Gantlett (*Rare Birds in Britain and Ireland*, 1989).

As emphasised in the introduction to part 1 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 631-635), all the records included in this analysis have been documented by the observers and then assessed and accepted by the relevant county, regional or national records committee. We urge all observers of scarce species to submit full details to the relevant county or regional recorder. Undocumented, hearsay reports (even if notified by well-known observers) have no value and no place in the permanent record for posterity.

Group 7. Gulls and skuas

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Sabine's Gull <i>Larus sabini</i>	60	557	442	202	153	135	104
Yellow-legged Gull <i>L. cachinnans</i>	557	744	1,565	974	738	1,030	1,136
Ring-billed Gull <i>L. delawarensis</i>	70	84	69	71	170	142	182
Long-tailed Skua <i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	330	393	1,358	222	311	5,350	161

*The work of the British Birds Rarities Committee is sponsored by *Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd*

The ‘Great Storm’ of October 1987 will be remembered for many years by those in southeast England for displacing unprecedented numbers of Sabine’s Gulls from the Bay of Biscay into parts of the country where they had, hitherto, been very rare (*Brit. Birds* 82: 191-208). It may be of interest to note, though, that, even without these records, 1987 would still have been the second-best year on record. Some 247 were recorded before 10th October, bettered then only by 1983 (321). We have estimated that some 310 were recorded after this date; this assumes that all those seen after 18th October were individuals moving on from their initial sites. It is not impossible that the figure could be as high as 550, the most important factor being the level of duplication of records in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, where flocks of 50 were seen on several occasions. Figs. 1, 2 & 3 show the numbers present on, respectively, 16th, 17th and 18th October 1987. Of the ‘storm-birds’ aged, 76% were adults. The year 1988 was also exceptional for this species, although not receiving the publicity of 1987. Records in 1988 occurred in more traditional areas: Cornwall had 192 and Co. Clare 74.

The vast majority of records of Yellow-legged Gulls are in the Southeast (figs. 4 & 5, page 608). Papers on the identification of this and related species, both in a British context and on a West Palearctic scale, are in preparation for publication in *British Birds*.

The apparent increase in numbers of Ring-billed Gulls between 1989 and 1990 is probably, at least in part, an artifact, as once a species is removed from the BBRC list it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish newly arrived individuals from returning and wandering birds, which would not be counted (as new occurrences) in the BBRC system. Future totals, as is generally the case with scarce migrants, will reflect the number of individuals arriving in Britain & Ireland during the course of a year, irrespective of whether they have already passed through in previous years.

There has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of Long-tailed Skuas recorded off our shores in recent years. Huge numbers were recorded in 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 121-136), but the totals in even the lesser years of 1986, 1987, 1989 and 1990 were exceeded by only one year prior to 1985. Then came 1991, with nearly three times as many as in the entire 1958-85 period (*Brit. Birds* 85: 102-103).

Group 8. Near-passerines

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
European Bee-eater <i>Merops apiaster</i>	18	36	32	27	14	66	16
Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>	91	170	174	133	141	103	150
Wryneck <i>Jynx torquilla</i>	313	355	319	270	180	129	216

Records of European Bee-eaters in Britain and Ireland ceased to be published in the British Birds Rarities Committee annual reports after 1990, when the species exceeded the criteria used to define a national rarity. In 1991, there was a major influx into eastern England during late June and July. We have assumed that three records of five seen in Essex and twice subsequently in Kent referred to the same flock.

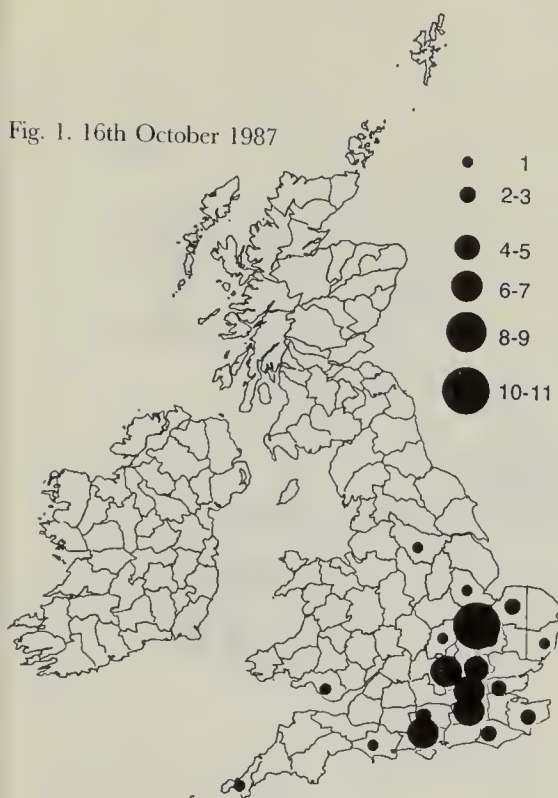


Fig. 1. 16th October 1987

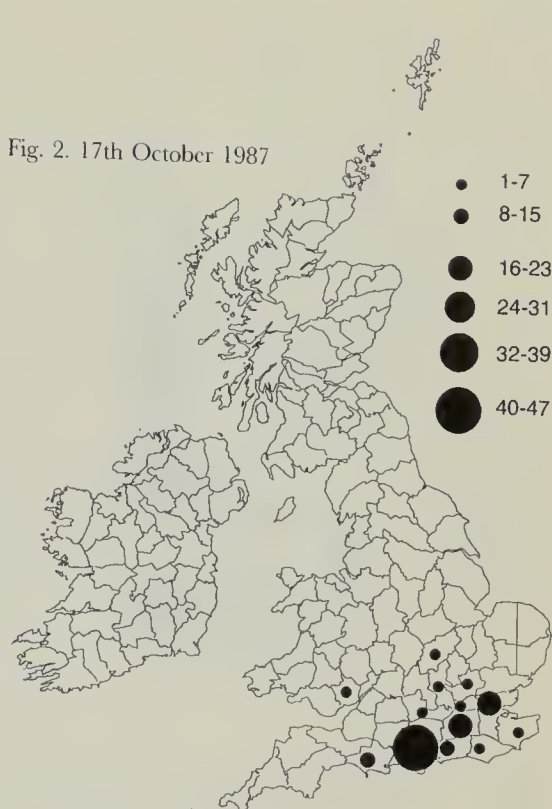


Fig. 2. 17th October 1987

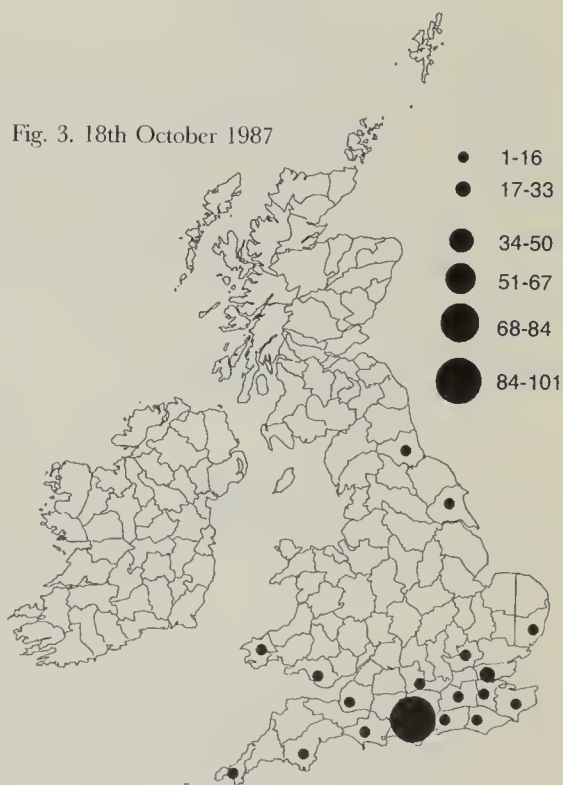
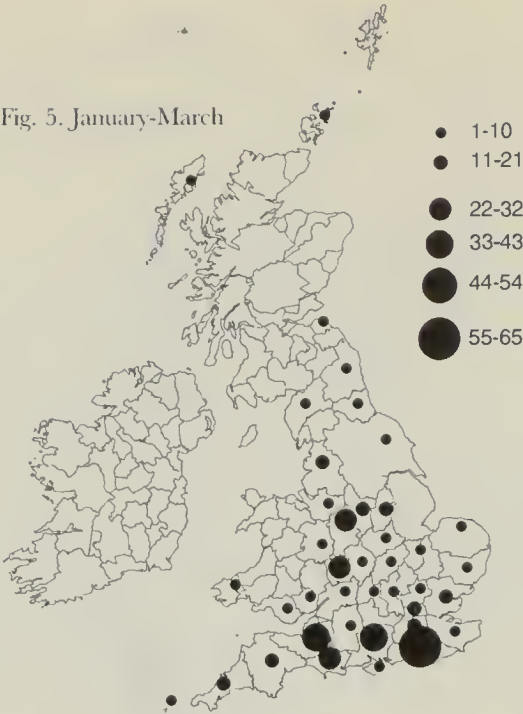
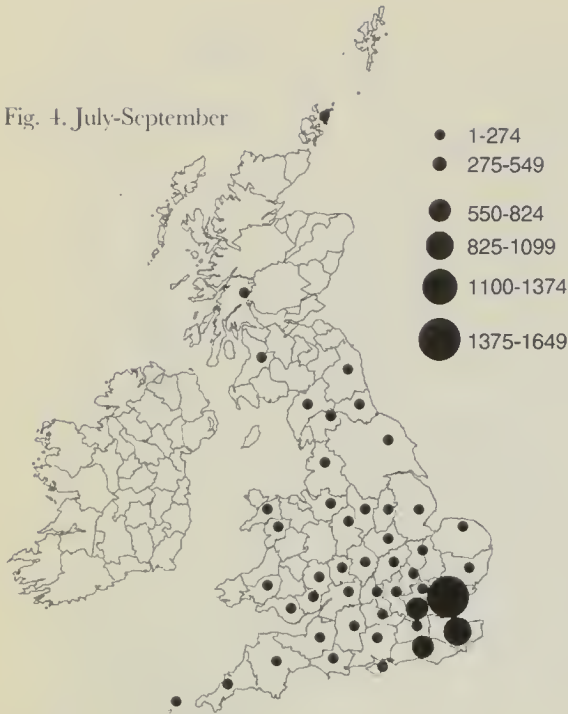


Fig. 3. 18th October 1987

Figs. 1-3. Distribution of Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini* on (1) 16th October 1987, (2) 17th October 1987, and (3) 18th October 1987. Note different scales of abundance on each map

The pattern of records of Hoopoes continues much as before: the 1986-92 average was 137, compared with 125 for 1958-85. The years 1958 (224) and 1968 (240) have yet to be bettered.



Figs. 4 & 5. Distribution of Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans* (4) in early autumn (July-September) 1986-92 and (5) in early winter (January-March) 1986-92. Note different scales of abundance on each map

Most Wrynecks occur in autumn (fig. 6). The mean annual total for 1986-92 is 255. The pattern is similar to that of Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* (see group 11), which has a similar breeding range, but the striking difference is the large number of inland records of Wrynecks (figs. 7 & 8). This may be due to the birds' feeding habits, which may bring them into back gardens, but raises the question of how many other European drift migrants go undetected away from the coast.

Group 9. Pipits and larks

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Horned Lark <i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	186	106	71	93	69	138	86
Richard's Pipit <i>Anthus novaeseelandiae</i>	40	109	151	71	94	58	122
Tawny Pipit <i>A. campestris</i>	43	40	43	37	38	26	55

The Horned Lark figures are provisional and will be revised in a more detailed analysis of this species.

The mean annual total of Richard's Pipits rose to 92 during 1986-92, from 57 during 1968-85, but this is not a statistically significant increase since, as with many Siberian migrants, the numbers reaching Western Europe vary enormously from year to year. The 151 in 1988 is only three short of the 1968 record (though there were many fewer observers then).

Tawny Pipits have also shown a slight, but not significant, increase. The 1986-91 mean was 40, compared with 30 during 1968-85.

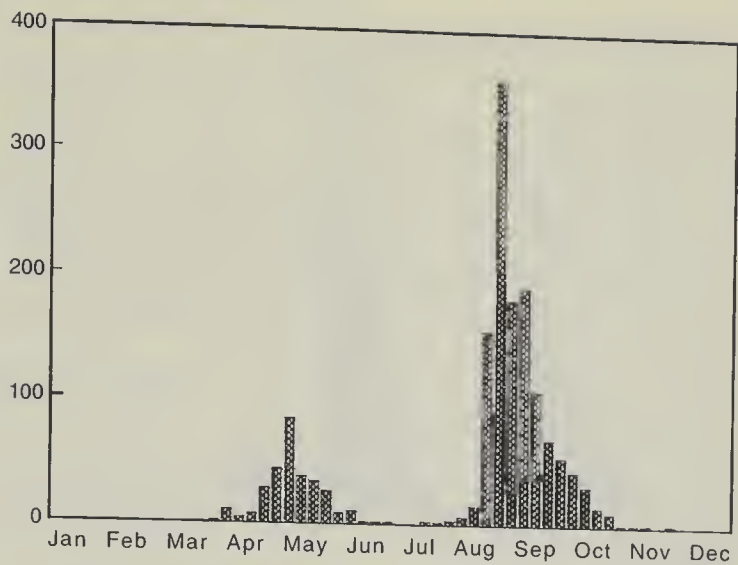
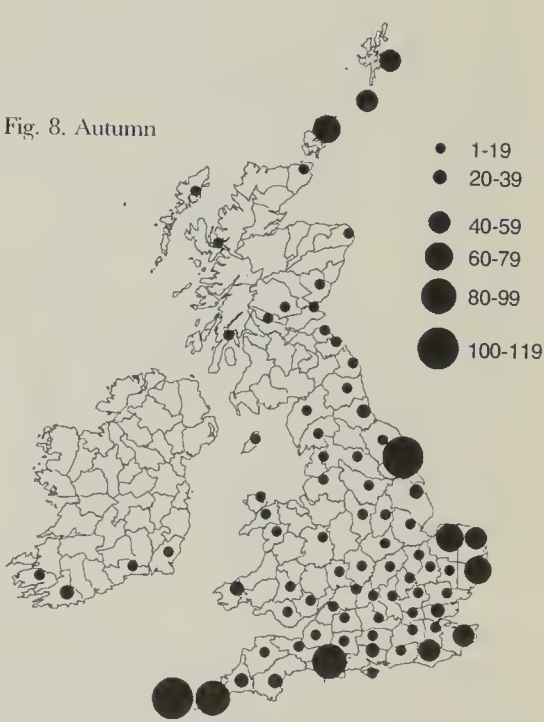
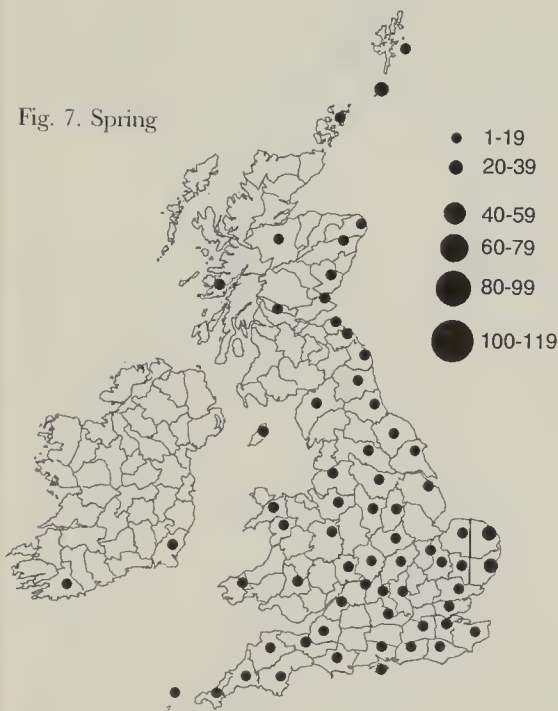


Fig. 6. Seasonal spread by weeks of Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* during 1986-91



Figs. 7 & 8. Distribution of Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* (7) in spring 1986-92 and (8) in autumn 1986-92

Group 10. Warblers

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Aquatic Warbler <i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	27	14	16	31	53	56	51
Icterine Warbler <i>Hippolais icterina</i>	87	106	112	93	59	54	240
Melodious Warbler <i>H. polyglotta</i>	38	36	30	24	43	24	43
Barred Warbler <i>Sylvia nisoria</i>	140	68	93	106	93	94	164
Pallas's Leaf Warbler <i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>	11	58	64	32	33	33	17
Yellow-browed Warbler <i>P. inornatus</i>	553	341	771	300	300	242	347

The numbers of Aquatic Warblers found each year depend almost entirely on the ringing effort in the reedbeds along the south coast of England. Totals in none of the recent years have reached the 99 recorded in 1976.

Annual totals of Icterine Warblers were on a plateau during 1986-91, with a mean of 85, compared with 93 during 1968-85. The totals for 1990 and 1991 were the lowest since 1972. The spring total of 31 in 1988 was the second-highest, but, although dwarfed by the 60 in spring 1984, neither year compared with the invasion of 1992, when 165 arrived between the last week of May and the last week of June.

Melodious Warbler records show little annual variation. The 1986-92 mean was 34, compared with a 1968-85 mean of 37.

Numbers of Barred Warblers fluctuate greatly from year to year, though are normally between 100 and 200. The 1986-92 mean was 108, compared with 135 for 1968-85.

The years 1988 and 1987 were the second-best and third-best for Pallas's Leaf Warblers, the peak year having been 1982 with 127.

The sudden jump in the numbers of Yellow-browed Warblers reaching Britain & Ireland which occurred in 1984 has been consolidated, with approaching 800 in 1988 and then around 300 annually during 1989-92. This species is now being found in winter nearly every year. Have we witnessed a shift in migration pattern of a portion of the population? And, if so, why has this shift occurred?

Group 11. Other passerines

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Bluethroat <i>Luscinia svecica</i>	61	251	215	81	66	40	86
Red-breasted Flycatcher <i>Ficedula parva</i>	111	116	136	131	76	82	67
Golden Oriole <i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	66	139	93	88	140	56	150
Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>	167	206	427	233	148	107	300
Great Grey Shrike <i>L. excubitor</i>	126	121	138	106	153	142	77
Woodchat Shrike <i>L. senator</i>	26	11	27	22	22	7	16
European Serin <i>Serinus serinus</i>	40	47	43	34	68	60	33
Common Rosefinch <i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	71	70	135	133	96	89	217
Ortolan Bunting <i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	78	38	72	61	43	32	81

There were two major Bluethroat falls on the North Sea coast, in the springs of 1987 and 1988. In 1987, some 187 were recorded during 22nd-27th May. The 1988 fall occurred some ten days earlier, beginning on 11th and peaking on 14th; some 146 were recorded during 11th-20th May. In both cases, all those subspecifically identified were of the red-spotted nominate race. In 1987, five were ascribed to the white-spotted race *cyaneacula* (all during 31st March to 5th April), and two others at the same time were claimed as the race *magna* (which breeds in the Caucasus and Iran), but which is not yet on the British & Irish List (some Iberian Bluethroats look very similar).

The mean annual totals of Red-breasted Flycatchers were 103 during 1986-92, compared with 91 during 1968-85; annual totals have been unremarkable.

Golden Orioles appear still to be increasing: the 1986-92 mean was 105, and only one year (1991) had fewer than the 1968-85 mean of 60. (We have endeavoured to include only migrant records in those counties which have a breeding population.)

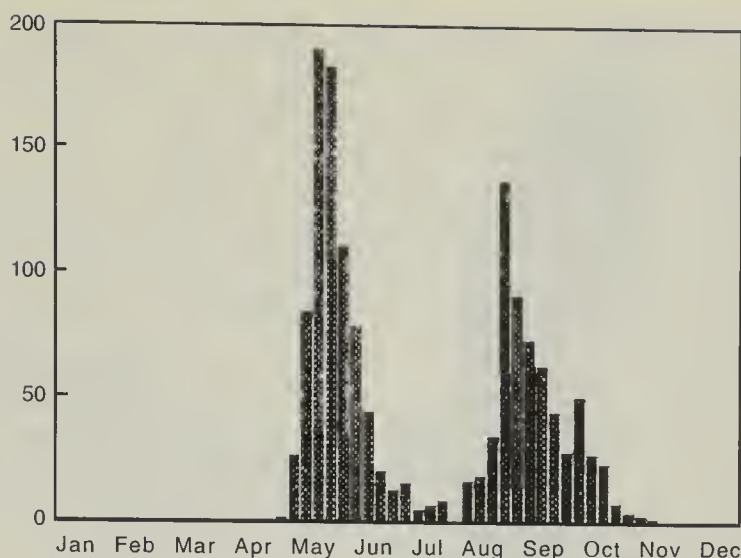
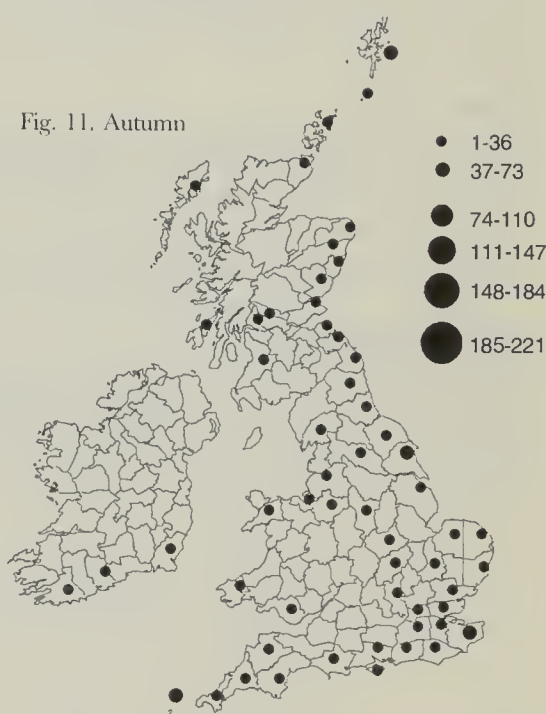
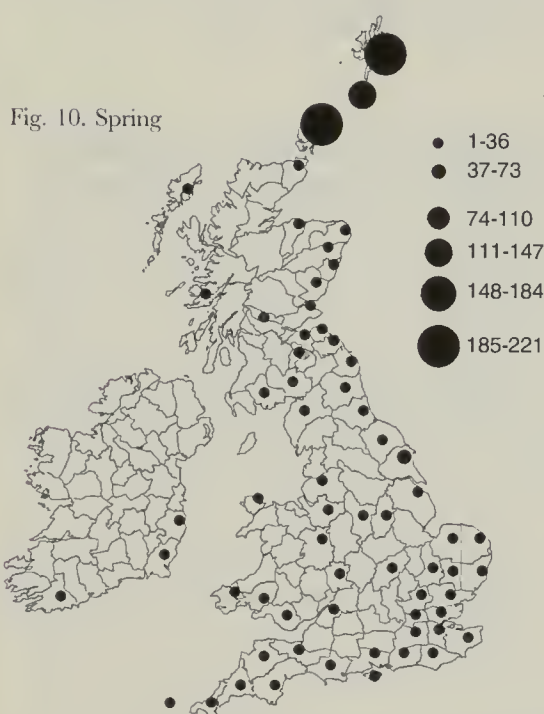


Fig. 9. Seasonal spread by weeks of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* during 1986-91



Figs. 10 & 11. Distribution of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* (10) in spring 1986-92 and (11) in autumn 1986-92

Red-backed Shrike records, like those of Wrynecks, were not analysed for *Rare Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1988), so are displayed here (figs. 9-11). The annual mean was 227, making Red-backed Shrikes somewhat rarer than Wrynecks (perhaps much rarer, for the shrike is much less likely to be overlooked). The years 1988 and 1992 were both marked by substantial spring influxes, 263 in 1988 and 228 in 1992. In contrast, 1992 produced only 40 Red-backed Shrikes in August and September, whereas 1988 saw 158 autumn migrants.

The Great Grey Shrike figures—like those for Horned Lark—are provisional, pending a more detailed analysis of exactly how many individuals are recorded here as migrants and as winter visitors.

For Woodchat Shrike, the year 1991 stands out as poor, the worst since 1972 (when there were also seven) and in the past 35 years exceeding only the lean spell of 1961-63 (when there were four, three and two in successive years). The 27 in 1988, however, was an all-time high.

The European Scrin bred sporadically in southern England during the 1970s and 1980s, but has not consolidated this tenuous foothold. It is a difficult species to assess, as many coastal watchpoints frequently report long series of observations in which it is obviously very difficult to estimate the number of individuals involved.

The recent upsurge of records of Common Rosefinch, especially in spring, has been one of the ornithological events of the last few years. We all wait with interest to see whether the species will become firmly established, or whether, like the preceding species, it will be added to the long list of those which have just failed fully to colonise from the Continent. A paper on the spread of the Common Rosefinch is being prepared by D. I. M. Wallace for publication in *British Birds*, but the records from the county bird reports already show the unprecedented number of spring arrivals in 1992.

Future plans

Now that the basic data have been assembled and the annual numbers summarised (in parts 1 and 2), we shall be looking in much more detail at the patterns of individual species and groups of species. We shall also be updating the database constantly and publishing revised figures at regular intervals.

Acknowledgments

The records published by the network of county, regional and national reports, stemming from the collection, assessment and collation of observers' observations by their recorders and report editors, make it practicable to monitor the changing fortunes of rare and uncommon birds in Britain & Ireland. We thank all those who by their labours make our analyses possible.

P. A. Fraser, 12 Redland Court Road, Bristol BS6 7EQ
Dr J. F. Ryan, Lynwood, Landeryon Gardens, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 4JN



Twenty-five years ago...

'Spotting rare birds' Your editorial in the January 1969 issue (*Brit. Birds*, 62: 1-3) stated: "Critics of the enjoyable sport of spotting rare birds have complained that it provides little of scientific value"; and it then went on to dispute this. Why bother? Who cares? Is not birdwatching a hobby, an interest, a pastime, any more? I have yet to learn of the additions to science from the players of golf or the devotees of angling. . . . I am a tally-hunter, a tick-hunter, a list-grubber, who owes no-one any explanation, and I will not stoop to pretend that I am ashamed to be so. Anyone else is free, if he wishes, to spend all his spare time advancing science by observing minutely the way a House Sparrow preens, but it bores me stiff and I will not spend my time reading it. . . . Like dentistry, I am glad someone is prepared to do it, but I want no hand in it myself. . . . A. F. MITCHELL' (*Brit. Birds* 62: 5-17, December 1969).

The Welsh Monk Vulture



*Keith Vinicombe, on behalf of the British Ornithologists' Union
Records Committee*

During the winter of 1977/78, a Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* was present in mid Wales. Although the identification was accepted by both the British Birds Rarities Committee and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, the record was rejected by the BOURC as being a likely escape from captivity (BOU 1980). The file was recirculated to the Committee in 1992 and the result was a 9:1 majority in favour of the species being placed in Category D1 of the British List (BOU 1993). Category D1 contains those species that would otherwise appear in Category A, except that there is reasonable doubt that they have ever occurred in a wild state. Despite the length of time since the occurrence, the record has remained controversial, and this article explains the reasons for the BOURC's decision.

The vulture was first seen by a farmer at Rhulen, near Aberedw, Powys, on 29th November 1977. He was apparently apprehensive at the time as his son was very ill and the arrival of the vulture was taken as a bad omen! The farmer, Mr Davies, telephoned local birdwatcher, Harold McSweeney, of Aberedw, telling him that he had a bird about the size of a turkey with an enormous hooked beak, walking around amongst his sheep. They dug up a dead sheep and laid it out in the field and, on 2nd December, HMeS obtained some photographs, despite poor conditions (plates 175 & 176). He then had it under observation for several weeks, during which time it was also seen at Glasbury and Painseastle. The vulture then moved to the vicinity of Llynheilyn (near Llanfihangel-nant-Melan), where it stayed until 8th February 1978. In all, it covered a north-south strip of about 22 km by 3 km (14 miles by 2 miles). Bob Richardson, the late Laurel Tucker, Nigel Tucker and I saw it on 14th and 15th January 1978, having travelled to Llanfihangel following a second-hand report of a Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*. On finding the bird, we

realised that the rumour had somehow become confused and that it was in fact a Monk Vulture. In view of its timid behaviour and the species' vagrancy to several northern European countries, we released the news onto the national grapevine and, consequently, it was widely twitched during the following weeks. After it left Llanfihangel, it moved to the RSPB Gwenffrwd reserve in Dyfed, about 45 km (27 miles) to the southwest, where it was last seen on 20th February.

A number of factors were taken into account by the BOURC in the record's two circulations and the following discussion is based on the contents of the file that passed around the Committee. I might add that the file was very detailed—it is now 3 cm thick!—and its compilation involved many hours of painstaking work, both with correspondents abroad and in obtaining and translating extensive foreign literature, some of it rather obscure. Much of this is done on a voluntary basis by the BOURC Secretary, Tim Inskipp, ably assisted by Ian Dawson. Whilst it would be impossible to claim that our researches were totally exhaustive, the sheer depth of the investigation was impressive.

Behaviour

Had the vulture been obviously tame, had it been ringed or had it worn jesses, then it would have immediately been discounted and soon forgotten. Our experience of 14th and 15th January, however, indicated that it was incredibly timid. We were unable to approach it in full view to within 400 m and, on 15th, it flushed at extremely long range: about 800 m. It seems that other visiting birders found it to be equally unapproachable. On the BBRC circulation, however, the then Welsh representative, Graham Williams, provided somewhat contradictory information. HMeS had considered it to be

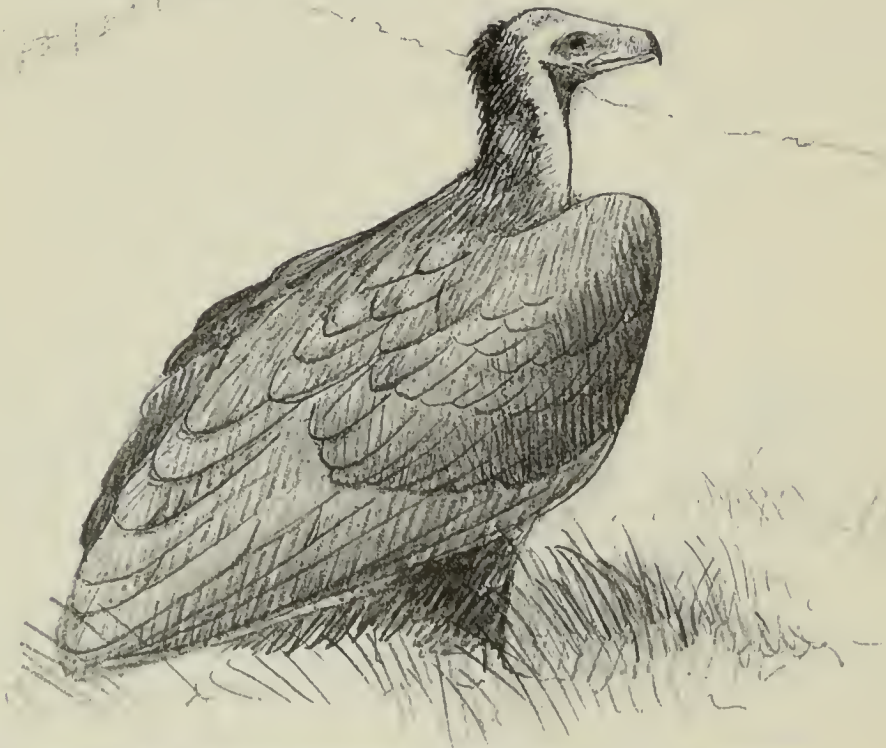


Fig. 1. Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus*, Powys, January 1978 (Laurel Tucker)

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quite wary, but people going about the farm in the normal way were accepted. On one occasion, he was able to stalk it to within 10 m, although this was facilitated by atrocious weather (H. McSweeney *in litt.*). He said that, when flushed, the vulture would glide from the hillside down to the valley and circle around from behind, the entire behaviour being in keeping with wild vultures that he had seen. John Humphrey, then warden at the Gwcnffrwd, said that it was sometimes quite bold in the air and would fly very near to people. On one occasion, it followed a local farmer quite closely as he fed his cattle, once landing in a tree on the edge of a field that he was in. Humphrey told Williams that it would sometimes drift over him and look at him from directly above before moving on. He contended that it came much closer than the resident Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo*.

These differing comments are somewhat difficult to evaluate, but they raise an obvious question: how would an escaped vulture behave anyway? One private collector told BR and NT that he had kept several species of vulture (but not Monk) and, in his experience, they had all quickly become tame and dependent. In contrast, Gardener (1980), who had a breeding pair of Griffons, two Turkey Vultures *Cathartes aura* and a pair of Bateleurs *Terathopius ecaudatus* in a large 13-m-high aviary, stated that none of them was tame despite regular cleaning and feeding.

State of plumage

On 14th and 15th January, the vulture appeared not to show any obvious signs of plumage wear, although we were never able to evaluate this at close range. HMeS felt that the primaries were frayed, while Peter Davis, who had excellent views within 30 m as it flew directly over him, considered that all the flight feathers were quite badly chipped and abraded, showing all along the trailing edge of the wings and tail and with 'small holes' in the primaries. John Humphrey, who saw it regularly, considered that the tips of its primaries, secondaries and tail feathers were abraded. Plates 175 and 176 unequivocally show abraded primaries and secondaries, the former apparently having some gaps in the vanes, but is this indicative of a captive origin? Large vultures are susceptible to abrasion, particularly since they may thrash their wings against vegetation on take-off, and several photographs of wild Monk Vultures show individuals with battered remiges (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 58: plate 36; Pforr & Limbrunner 1981). I showed McSweeney's photographs to Niek Williams, the Department of the Environment's Chief Wildlife Inspector, who has extensive experience with captive raptors as well as with wild Monk Vultures. He considered that the gaps in the primaries *may* have been caused principally by the parting of the vanes on take-off (particularly if the vegetation had been wet) rather than as a result of captivity. He considered that captive vultures tend to snap off the tips of their primaries and that the 'damage' shown in the photographs would not *necessarily* indicate a captive origin. Bob Scott, who also carries out inspection work for the DoE, told Ian Dawson that he considered that there was nothing untoward in the feather wear and that he had seen photographs of wild Monk Vultures in Mallorca in far worse condition. As with the bird's behaviour, its state of plumage was somewhat inconclusive.



175. Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus*, Powys, December 1977 (H. McSweeney)

Ageing

Using the criteria outlined by Shirihai (1988), it is clear that the Welsh Monk Vulture was not a juvenile. The base of the bill was greyish, the exposed skin on its head was whitish, its legs were whitish and it had a thin buffy bar edging the underwing-coverts. Indeed, reference to *BWP* strongly suggests that it was a full adult. One could perhaps conjecture that a genuine vagrant would most likely have been a juvenile or an immature.

Breeding status

A major argument against its being wild is the fact that Monk Vulture is now a very rare breeding bird in Europe. Meyburg & Meyburg (1983) summarised the populations about the time of the Welsh occurrence and, unless otherwise stated, the following information is based on their findings: mainland Spain (190-250 pairs), Mallorca (five pairs in 1981-82), Sardinia (one to two pairs), Bulgaria (probably one or two pairs), Greece (15 pairs), Cyprus (still perhaps two pairs), Turkey (estimated over 100 pairs), Crimea (five to eight pairs), Caucasus (200-300 pairs in East Georgia) and Armenia (about 50 pairs). It is apparent that larger populations occur farther east, with 500-800 pairs (maximum 1,000) in the stronghold of the arid steppes and highlands of Central Asia. In Mongolia, it was described as the commonest vulture. In China, Ye (1991) estimated a decreasing population of 1,760 individuals. In Tibet, the Monk Vulture is worshipped and is thus protected, but, in recent years, the use of chemical pesticides against rodents has led to the poisoning of vultures and their breeding rate has declined. Many are also trapped and shot for the trade in their feathers (Ye 1991) and the export of 300 frozen specimens in 1979 indicates the scale of the problem (Meyburg & Meyburg 1983).

Incidentally, in Spain there has been a recovery since the late 1970s. In 1988, Collar & Andrew gave the Spanish population as about 365 pairs in 16



176. Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus*, Powys, December 1977 (H. McSweeney)

colonies, while Hiraldo & Donázar (1990) considered that the European population was about 500 pairs, 90% of which were in Spain. In 1991, the Spanish population was described as having undergone a 'rapid recovery', with a population of 774 pairs in 27 colonies (*Brit. Birds* 84: 229).

Movements and vagrancy

Ferguson-Lecs (1965) stated that the species was largely sedentary, although in Tibet and Mongolia some individuals appear to move down into the Chinese lowlands in winter. It is, however, clearly capable of longer movements, as it is an extremely rare vagrant through Eilat, Israel, both in spring (February to March) and autumn (October to November), usually with one or two in any season, accompanying flocks of Steppe Eagles *Aquila nipalensis* (Shirihai & Christie 1992). (Note how the timing of the migration through Eilat corresponds with the dates of the appearance and departure of the Welsh bird.) It has also been recorded at Suez (Bijlsma 1983), the Bosphorus (Bijlsma 1987) and the Dardanelles (Martins 1989) while, farther south, it has been reported from the Sinai, Egypt and the Sudan (Bijlsma 1983), as well as from Arabia, northern India, Burma and south China (Moreau 1972). There is often an assumption that large birds of prey are unable to cross significant expanses of water, yet the species has wandered to Japan, where there were four records prior to 1953 and have been ten since (Brazil & Hanawa 1991). Most of these have been in December, but it has wintered at least once: in 1982/83 at Ibaraki-ken, where it was present until at least 23rd February. Individuals recorded in southern Japan are likely to have come via the Korean Peninsula, where they winter in small numbers. Such a flight would involve a minimum sea crossing of about 150 km. A record of one on the island of Iriomote-jima in December 1967 would have involved two sea crossings of some 130 km and 175 km had it taken the most direct route from mainland China, via Taiwan.

The BOURC was able to trace at least 99 *records* (as opposed to individuals) from elsewhere in northern and central Europe outside the former Soviet Union. The vast majority were from the nineteenth century, and most were from the period May to October. The preponderance of records from eastern Europe may suggest an easterly origin, but the species was clearly much more numerous in those days, and nineteenth-century breeding records from the Slovakian High Tatra (two nests) and the Austrian Southern Alps (three nests) indicate that some of these reports probably related to individuals wandering up from the south. The lack of modern records from northern Europe (only 13 since 1945, including six considered or known to have been escapes) shows just how rare the species has become. The foregoing breeding records and the following are, unless otherwise stated, based on Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* (1971).

AUSTRIA About 18 records, if multiple sightings are counted as single records. The only post-1945 records were in August 1960 (two records) and in August 1963.

SWITZERLAND Three records in the nineteenth century and four in the twentieth, the last being in June 1938 (Winkler 1987).

FORMER CZECHOSLOVAKIA Recorded at least 25 times since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the last being in May 1929. There were single records in January, October and December, but all the others were in the period April to August. Occasionally, groups of up to 60 turned up and such influxes were repeated annually for a short period. Thus, a flock patrolled through Bohemia and Moravia from 1872 to 1877 and, in 1900, 13 reached northeast Bohemia.

POLAND There were at least 11 nineteenth-century records, each involving one to three individuals, and three in the twentieth century involving singles in May 1906, May 1949 and a juvenile caught in Kielce in mid August 1982 (Tomiałoje 1990).

FINLAND One in Ylivieska, central Finland, from about 19th to 24th June 1976 was considered to have been an escape. It was seen by local people, not birdwatchers, but was very tame (viewed down to 2 m) and was described as 'frightening', it raising its neck feathers and hissing when approached (Hongell 1989; Hannu Jännes *in litt.*).

GERMANY (EAST) About 11 records, some nine of which were in the nineteenth century, including two cases of two, one of three and one shot from a group of 11 in May 1849. The two twentieth-century records were both post-War, in May 1953 and August 1956. The latter was of a young bird captured and taken to Berlin Zoo, where it was still alive in January 1971.

GERMANY (WEST) Seventeen certain and two uncertain records. There are ten certain records from Bavaria, the last being taken from a group of six in May 1921 (Wüst 1981). The uncertain records involved three in July 1923 and one in 1925 or 1926. Interestingly, Wüst states that *apart from escapes* (my italics) there have been no records from Bavaria for 'more than 50 years'. There are a nineteenth-century record from Lower Saxony, five old records from Schleswig-Holstein and one in Hamburg-Stellingen in June-July 1917, the last for northern Germany (Niethammer *et al.* 1964).

DENMARK Two old winter records from the last century have recently been removed from the Danish List (Olsen 1991), and one that was present from 17th August to 13th September 1974 (Christensen 1974) was considered to have been an escape (Pedersen 1980).

THE NETHERLANDS AND BELGIUM Perhaps of greatest relevance to the Welsh record are five recent occurrences in Belgium and the Netherlands. In chronological order:

1948 One was shot at Wamel, Gelderland, Netherlands, on 12th October 1948 (de Reuver 1955) and this was accepted onto the Dutch List. The person who shot the bird was lined by the local police and the specimen is now in the collection of the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie in Leiden (van IJzendoorn & de Heer 1985) (plate 177). It appeared to be a female and, because of its lack of abrasion and in particular the perfect condition of the tail and claws, it was considered unlikely to have escaped from captivity (A. B. van den Berg *in litt.*).

1975 An escaped ringed individual from Germany was found alive at Hocke, West Flanders, Belgium, in 1975 (Herroelen 1979).

1977 One over Kalloo, northwest of Antwerp, Belgium, on 8th March 1977 (Gerené 1977) was accepted into the Belgian Category D, but is now considered to have been an escape (P. Herroelen *in litt.*). What may have been the same bird was twice reported over the border in the Netherlands. A local newspaper carried a report of one at Hoek, Zeeuwsvlaanderen, Zeeland (40 km from Kalloo) on 7th March, but no documentation was ever submitted to the Dutch rarities committee. The other sighting was on 4th April, when one was observed for at least 15 minutes circling 60 m above Middelburg, Walcheren, Zeeland. This record, however, was rejected by the Dutch rarities committee because the description was considered to be inconclusive. It was reported that it showed no damage except for one-and-a-half secondaries missing on the right wing (A. B. van den Berg *in litt.*).

1978 On 23rd April 1978, one was seen flying north near Castricum, North Holland. It was seen again in the northeast of the country two weeks later and noted to have a strap around its neck (Q. L. Slings *in litt.*), although this record was not submitted to the Dutch rarities committee (A. B. van den Berg *in litt.*).

1990 Finally, one flying west in Antwerpen-Blokkersdijk, Belgium, on 21st October 1990 was also considered probably to have been an escape (Symens 1990).

That there were two definite escapes and two considered escapes at large just across the North Sea during the period August 1974 to April 1978 clearly indicates that the potential for an escaped Monk Vulture to turn up in Britain at that time was very real. Indeed, there must be a possibility that the March 1977 Belgian (and possibly Dutch) individual subsequently made its way westwards to appear in Wales later that year. It could just be conceivable that the 1974 Danish, the 1976 Finnish, the 1977 Belgian (and Dutch) and the 1977/78 Welsh records all related to one wandering individual.



177. Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* shot in the Netherlands on 12th October 1948, now in the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie in Leiden (A. B. van den Berg)

FRANCE For the sake of completeness, and *in addition to* the aforementioned north European occurrences, there were several records from southern France in the nineteenth century. There have been only five individuals this century: in September 1955, two in July 1976, one in June 1981 (Dubois & Yésou 1992) and one in April 1991 (Dubois *et al.* 1992), all in provinces bordering the Pyrénées. Also, one in Aude in October 1992 was probably one of four released in the Cévennes in a recent reintroduction programme (*Brit. Birds* 86: 281).

Status in captivity

Shortly after the sighting of the Welsh bird, NT obtained from Tim Inskipp a list of 32 zoos, bird gardens and private collections thought likely to keep large vultures. Although clearly not an exhaustive list, all were contacted by telephone by BR and NT and the following held the species (with no losses): Flamingo Gardens and Zoo Park, Buckinghamshire; Flamingo Land at Malton, West Yorkshire; Twycross Zoo, Leicestershire; Bristol Zoo; and London Zoo. Despite the story of the vulture reaching the national press, no losses were reported. On the last BOURC circulation, however, Tim Inskipp recalled hearing of a free-flying Monk Vulture in a zoo on the Isle of Man, but he was unable to trace the details and cannot say whether it was in the zoo subsequent to the sighting of the Welsh individual. This does suggest, though, that there may have been other captive Monk Vultures that were not revealed by our enquiries. There is also a possibility that the vulture was being held illegally and its escape was not reported for that reason or that it escaped on the Continent. In this respect, as well as the Belgian and Dutch escapes noted above, Paul Herroelen (*in litt.*) was able to trace a reference to 11 ringed Monk Vultures held in captivity in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, in 1975-79.

Conclusions

In view of the previous extralimital records in northern European countries and the species' ability to make extensive sea crossings, the Committee conceded that there was a *possibility*, albeit unlikely, that the Monk Vulture could occur in Britain as a wild vagrant. Against this, it appears to have decreased to the point where, outside Spain, the European population is now very small and, as a consequence, records of vagrancy to other parts of Europe are now few and far between. At least two records in northwest Europe around the time of the Welsh sighting involved escapes. The majority of records of vagrants to northern and central Europe were from the nineteenth century, when the species was much commoner in southern Europe. Unlike the Welsh record, most of those occurred in summer. The possibility must exist, however, that it originated from Asia, where the species is more numerous. Comments on the bird's behaviour were somewhat contradictory, although it can be concluded that it did nothing *positively* to indicate a captive origin. Similarly, the state of its plumage was inconclusive, although two photographs by Harold McSweeney show extensive plumage wear that *may* indicate that it had been in captivity. That it appeared to be an adult would also militate against its being wild.

The fact of the matter is that we simply do not know where the vulture came from and it seems highly unlikely that we ever shall. The Committee decided, however, that the possibility that it was an escape from captivity

outweighed the possibility of its being a genuinely wild vagrant and the species was placed in Category D1 of the British List.

Acknowledgments

I am very grateful to Ian Dawson, Tim Inskipp, Dr Alan Knox, Peter Lansdown, John Marchant and Harold McSweeney for their comments on an earlier draft and to Drs. Arnoud B. van den Berg for his help with the Dutch records. Lasse Braae, Paul Herroelen, Hannu Jännes, Dr Alan Knox, John Marchant, Q. L. Slings and Joe Sultana also provided details of, or commented on, the Continental records. Ian Dawson helped greatly by translating German literature.

Summary

A Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* was present at various localities in Powys and Dyfed from 29th November 1977 to 20th February 1978. The record, previously rejected, has now been placed in Category D1 of the British & Irish List by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee. Reasons for this decision are discussed, with reference to the bird's behaviour, its state of plumage and age, its breeding status, the vagrancy patterns in Europe and Asia and its status in captivity.

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Keith Vinicombe, 11 Kennington Avenue, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 9EU



Requests

Colour-marked birds: a reminder Although colour-marking may be used in purely local studies (e.g. of behaviour), the majority of studies of marked populations depend upon co-operation from all observers who sight the marked individuals. Only in exceptional instances do we publish separate requests on this subject (there are far too many such studies to include them all). If you see a marked bird (other than with ordinary BTO rings), please report it as follows:

CORMORANTS Colour-ring sightings, Dr Robin Sellers, Rose Cottage, Ragnall Lane, Walkley Wood, Nailsworth, Gloucester GL6 0RU.

SWANS AND GESE: Colour-ring sightings, Carl Mitchell, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7B1.

WADERS: Wader Study Group, PO Box 247, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5SN.

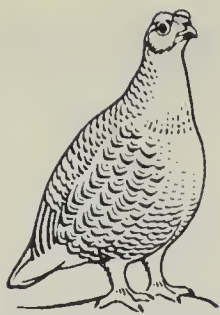
GULLS: Large gulls: Peter Rock, 32 Kersteman Road, Redlands, Bristol BS6 7BX; small gulls: Kjeld Pedersen, Daglykkevej 7, DK-2650 Hvidovre, Denmark.

ALL OTHER SPECIES: Kevin Baker, BTO, The Nunnery, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

Drawings of rare breeding birds Artists may care to note that line-drawings are included within the report on 'Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom' every year, and that *British Birds* always welcomes the submission of drawings of appropriate species for possible selection. Sizes should be those specified for the Bird Illustrator of the Year competition: 17.1 cm wide × 6.9 cm deep, or 8.25 cm wide × 6.0 cm deep, for publication at two-thirds of those sizes. Please send drawings to the *BB* Editorial Office.

Readership Survey by FREEPOST By indicating your preferences, you will be able to influence the future contents of *BB*. Please take a few minutes to help us by completing the pull-out form on page ix in the centre of this issue. You can return it to us by FREEPOST. Thank you.

Binoculars and telescopes survey, VI Our first five surveys of subscribers' opinions of their binoculars and telescopes were in 1978, 1982, 1984, 1987 and 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 429-439; 76: 155-161; 78: 167-175; 81: 149-160; 84: 267-282). The results are always so interesting and useful in showing birdwatching trends that we now repeat such surveys at regular intervals. The survey form for the sixth is inserted with this issue and we hope that *BB* subscribers will again help us by completing and returning this form to us: British Birds Survey, Freepost BF955, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3BR.



Notes

Bulwer's Petrel and White-faced Storm-petrel diving as an evasion

tactic On 14th July 1991, in the North Atlantic between the Iberian peninsula and the Azores, I made the following observations. At 39°00'N, 19°05'W, I watched a Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* at about 100 m hovering briefly with head bent forwards and wings parallel with the surface, apparently foraging. Suddenly, it dashed uncharacteristically to the water, floated momentarily and dived. As it did so, a subadult Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* swooped within centimetres of it; again the skua swooped, and the surfacing petrel promptly dived once more, in a manner reminiscent of a Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*. As the skua disappeared, the petrel resurfaced and flew off, apparently unharmed.

On the same day, at 38°36'N, 20°59'W, while I was watching two White-faced Storm-petrels *Pelagodroma marina* at close range, an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* which had been following the vessel suddenly wheeled over one of them, hovering unsteadily in the light breeze. The storm-petrel splashed down to the surface in a manner much as when feeding, and then dived; four times in about one minute the storm-petrel dived and resurfaced, as the gull continued to hover clumsily overhead. When the gull rejoined the vessel, the storm-petrel promptly resumed its characteristic flight. During the entire incident, the second storm-petrel continued to fly only a few metres away, apparently undisturbed.

There appears to be no discussion in the literature (c.g. *BWP*) on diving behaviour of these petrels. Nevertheless, it may well be that, in exceptional circumstances, evasion tactics will include diving.

C. C. MOORE

v/v Monte Mar R/C. Monte Sta. Luzia, 2775 Parede, Portugal

Brent Geese taking bread Brent Geese *Branta bernicla* regularly winter in the north Solent at Kcyhaven, Hampshire. In late winter, at periods of high tide, flocks of over 1,000 individuals spend much time grazing in coastal fields, before flying to adjacent saltings to feed on marine grasses, including salt-marsh-grass *Puccinellia*, and, in shallow-water mudflats, on green algae. During the 1980s, these geese became increasingly tame, allowing cars and boats to approach to within 10 m on occasions. Day visitors use the road along the upper shore and regularly provide supplementary foods, chiefly picnic scraps and bread, that are taken by ducks, Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* and Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*. On seven occasions over the period January-March in both 1990 and 1991, up to four Brent Geese at a time came to take bread thrown on to the upper mudflats by picnickers: another indication of the more

flexible feeding behaviour of this goose, which was formerly linked so strongly with eelgrass *Zostera* as its key food material in winter. DAVID GLUE

British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU

Hobbies nesting on pylons I was interested in the recent notes on Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* nesting on pylons (*Brit. Birds* 86: 625; 87: 335-336). A pair used an old nest of Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* on a pylon near here in 1993 and again in 1994, and I suspect in previous years. It is probably a quite usual habit here in the Rhine-Neckar plain. JOHN F. BURTON

Wasserturmstrasse 53, 69214 Eppelheim, Heidelberg, Germany

Further such reports will be filed for reference. EDS

Water Rail feeding in overhanging alder On 23rd September 1991, at a small stretch of marsh near Maidstone, Kent, I watched an adult Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* suddenly fly up into low, overhanging branches of an alder *Alnus glutinosa*. It confidently walked among the thin branches, appearing to peck for insects, although I could not be sure what it was eating. *BWP* (vol. 2) mentions a Water Rail flying into an apple tree *Malus* to remove fruit.

DON TAYLOR

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Wood Pigeon copulating with Collared Dove In the second half of May 1991, in my neighbour's garden near Hastings, East Sussex, a (presumed male) Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* and a (presumed female) Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* were consorting together in a large poplar tree *Populus*, as though paired. There was much activity on the part of the Wood Pigeon, and at first I thought that one of the birds was trying to drive the other away, but it soon became apparent that the Wood Pigeon was in fact courting the dove. When the latter was perched, fairly passive and silent, on a branch (not always the same one), the pigeon would land first in front of and then behind her, bowing deeply with raised tail and uttering a more liquid note than his usual song; now and again, the pigeon would stop and preen. The dove made no attempt to repel his attentions. On the third or fourth day (26th May), the Wood Pigeon's display became much more excited and included some hopping and more preening. He then mounted the dove, apparently successfully; immediately afterwards, the pigeon called loudly and continued his display, but in a much more subdued manner. This sequence of events was observed at least twice more over the following days, but the property then changed hands and the new owner cut down the poplar. There were no subsequent observations, no nest was seen, and I had no reports of hybrid young.

There would seem no reason to account for this deviant behaviour, since both Wood Pigeons and Collared Doves are plentiful in the district. Derek Goodwin's suggestion (*in litt.*), that one or both birds may have been hand-reared in the company of the other species, is, I suppose, possible, although enquiries made locally did not produce any evidence; his other suggestion,

that egg-substitution may have occurred, I consider highly unlikely, as the district is inhabited almost exclusively by the elderly retired. J. A. B. GALE
Argosy, 11 Rockmead Road, Fairlight, Hastings, East Sussex TN35 4DJ

Juvenile migrant Barn Swallows in Britain in 1991 In 1991, a Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* in juvenile plumage was watched with two adults at Warsash, Hampshire, on 14th May and a juvenile was among migrant flocks of hirundines at College Lake, Buckinghamshire, on 16th May. These observations coincided with a milder southwesterly airflow that followed a prolonged period of cool, sometimes damp weather over Britain during much of April and early May, when persistent northerly winds contrived to hold back many spring migrants. In Britain and many parts of central-western Europe, Barn Swallows may start laying early clutches in mid April, generally a week or more earlier in southern Europe, with first eggs laid in March in parts of Spain and northwest Africa (BWP 5). These juveniles, as those recorded previously in May in several parts of Britain, with the earliest in the Channel Islands on 16th April 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 62: 282-284; 70: 122; 73: 312-313; 84: 572), may well have been swept up from such breeding places in the Mediterranean basin, perhaps accompanying swallows of South African origin held up on passage for a long period.

DAVID GLUE

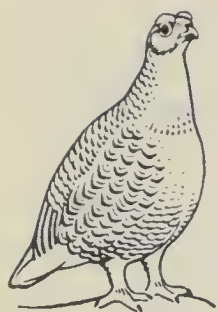
British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU

Wintering Blackcap and Great Tits swallowing beech seeds apparently whole At about 11.00 GMT on 3rd February 1991, in mature woodland near West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, I saw a female Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* feeding with four Great Tits *Parus major* on the ground. The birds were foraging as a party under beech trees *Fagus sylvatica*; the temperature at the time was around freezing, and snow was lying in patches. The Blackcap, which I watched through binoculars for about five minutes, was seen to swallow portions of the beech seeds, although, on several occasions, some nuts were swallowed apparently whole, or nearly so, after nibbling; the Great Tits behaved similarly. I had the impression, however, that the warbler was less skilled than the tits at dealing with the fallen beech seeds. Eventually, the five birds flew off, as a group, to a nearby beech tree and became lost to view. Wintering Blackcaps in Britain are known to feed on berries of various species, as well as on bread and fat at garden birdtables. Eric Simms (1985, *British Warblers*) did not mention beech nuts as a food of Blackcaps.

A. P. RADFORD

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The swallowing of beech nuts whole is very surprising, especially so for Great Tits. Further, corroborating observations will be welcomed. EDS



Letters

Brent Geese with white neck bands In Devon during winter 1988/89, David Flumm recorded three adult Brent Geese *Branta bernicla* of the nominate race with the white neck patches joined at the front, forming a neck band and thus, in that respect, resembling the race *nigricans* (*Brit. Birds* 84: 220-221).

On 13th October 1993, on Texel, Noordholland, I noticed such an individual amongst some 2,000 other Brent Geese. Apart from the broad white collar, broken only at the rear, it looked much the same as the other adults present.

From this and David Flumm's earlier note, it would appear that the neck patches are a variable character. Does the neck ring of *nigricans* vary as well?

P. COMBRIDGE

10 By the Wood, Calmore, Totton, Hampshire SO40 3FQ

Rob Hume has commented: 'The neck rings of Brent Geese in The Natural History Museum, Tring, have been looked at by members of the British Birds Rarities Committee, together with other features that may help distinguish the race *nigricans*. Clearly, on rare occasions, individuals of other races may have neck rings joining (narrowly) at the front, while *nigricans* can have a frontal band of reduced width. The Siberian race *orientalis* may further complicate the issue, with relatively narrow or streaked frontal neck bands. With individuals of mixed-race parentage also reported, the BBRC considered that only those individuals seen clearly in the field to show all the important features—'classic' *nigricans* individuals—should be recorded as such.' EDS

Supercilium difference between Radde's and Dusky Warblers Dr Colin Bradshaw usefully summarised the main differences between Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* and Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* (*Brit. Birds* 87: 436-441). Apparently, in the past a few Dusky Warblers have been misidentified as Radde's because of a lack of appreciation of the variability of the former (e.g., *Dutch Birding* 14: 17-19). Although kindly referring to the biometrics as given by me in *Identification Guide to European Passerines*, Bradshaw and all other authors have surprisingly failed to mention one difference in the supercilium pattern which I described in the blue edition of my guide (1984) and which I made even more clear in the green (1992, pp. 208-209): The *forepart of the supercilium*, especially the dorsal (upper) edge between bill and eye, is *sharply defined on Dusky but diffusely on Radde's*. When examining long series of skins, numerous photographs, and those birds seen close enough in the field, this holds true for 99% (the odd exceptions being mostly due to feathers lost during either trapping, or heavy moult). The difference has nothing to do with the width of the supercilium (although Dusky typically, but not invariably, has a narrow supercilium between eye and bill), or the colour (although Radde's

practically always has a buff tinge there, it can bleach to more whitish, occasionally approaching the typically whitish forepart of Dusky). When extracting a bird of one of these two species from a mistnet, it is possible to tell which one just by glancing at this character; measuring the bill later in the lab will then be a mere confirmation. The only field guide which shows the difference well is Lars Jonsson's (*Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East*, 1992, p. 451), but only on the plate—it is not mentioned in the text. I should add that there is one other species which shares the diffuse forepart-of-supercilium pattern with Radde's Warbler: the East Asian species Yellow-streaked Warbler *P. amandii*, so far not recorded in Europe.

LARS SVENSSON

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Identification of Pine Bunting I was surprised that Dr Colin Bradshaw and Martin Gray (*Brit. Birds* 86: 378-386) originally thought that the problem of the identification of female Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* was so simplistic. The huge difference in coloration between males of Yellowhammer *E. citrinella* and Pine Bunting means that the colour range of hybrids is immense and for this reason some authorities considered them conspecific for many years. There is a wide overlap zone where interbreeding takes place in the former Soviet Union. Neither of these points was mentioned in the article.

Whilst it is clear that Pine Buntings occur in the UK, as these come from at least as far east as the overlap zone (and possibly farther east), it stands to reason that individuals from the hybrid zone also occur. This surely leads to the conclusion that, potentially at least, more hybrids will occur in the UK than Pine Buntings.

In 'good' years (often when Siberian vagrants appear in the UK in good numbers, e.g. 1980, 1990), parties of Yellowhammers appear in the Northern Isles in late October or early November. I have seen several individuals which appeared 'washed out', unlike 'normal' Yellowhammers. Some, in my opinion, were probably hybrids and two were superficially identical to the Big Waters bunting, but the first had a yellow chin and the second a yellow crown spot. Neither had yellow elsewhere.

But is it that easy? We like things in neat boxes and this manifests itself in articles and descriptions by observers trying to 'prove' a bird in order to get it accepted. We like things in black and white—or, in this case, yellow and white. I quote from *The Handbook* (Witherby *et al.*), under Pine Bunting, adult male winter: 'Exceptionally throat is white or yellowish-white and centre of crown tinged pale yellow.'

Yellow and white? It's not even as simple as that!

JOHN HOLLOWAY
Castle, Stronsay, Orkney

Dr Colin Bradshaw has commented: 'The ratio of hybrids to Pine Buntings depends on whether hybrids or one or other parent species predominate in the hybrid zone. The hybrid zone is no farther west than the Pine Buntings, which in turn extend a lot farther east. As there must be Pine Buntings to produce hybrids in the overlap zone, no hybrids farther west and a lot fewer farther east, Pine Buntings must logically be more likely to reach the UK than hybrids. The eastern race of Yellowhammer *E. c. erythrogenys* looks like a 'grey Yellowhammer', quite unlike normal British individuals: the two washed-out individuals mentioned may have been hybrids or may have been of this race.'

Theoretically, there could be a zone where hybrids are more common than either parent species, assuming that they are equally fertile and pair with other hybrids; but female hybrids may be more attracted to pure-bred males. Is the hybrid zone populated by Yellowhammers, Pine Buntings and 'new' hybrids (with equal numbers of each parent or a predominance of one or the other), or by a stable, self-perpetuating, fertile hybrid population which effectively eliminates pure-bred individuals of either type? It is possible, too, that individuals from farther east 'leapfrog' the west of the Pine Bunting (and hybrid) range and occur here more frequently than individuals from the west (in the same way as northern waders and terns often leapfrog more southerly breeding populations and migrate to winter farther to the south). This would make Pines more likely than hybrids, but the situation is currently impossible to judge.

The 'washed-out' Yellowhammers/hybrids cannot be conclusively identified: currently, *erythrogenys* is not on the British & Irish List, but it cannot be ruled out in such instances. EDS

Real birdwatchers In venturing an editorial opinion in response to David Norman's letter on the meaning of 'Real birdwatchers' (*Brit. Birds* 87: 279), it is surprising that you have gone to such an extent without apparently consulting 'the bible'. The late Peter Conder, in Campbell & Lack (1985, *A Dictionary of Birds*), left us with a very comprehensive definition of bird-watching (sic), starting with 'a general term for almost all forms of admiring, observing or studying birds in the field'. Is it really necessary to go any farther?

BOB MEDLAND

PO Box 30370, Lilongwe 3, Malawi

Peter Conder (*ibid.*) also defined ornithologist as 'one who studies birds scientifically', commenting that 'many who are really amateur ornithologists now call themselves bird-watchers'. He distinguished 'tally-hunters or "twitchers"', as they have been recently called in Britain ("birders" in North America), [who] seek to identify and list as many species as they can . . .

Although originally North American, the term 'birder' is now voluntarily applied to themselves by many British birdwatchers (especially by twitchers and by those concerned wholly or mainly with identification), perhaps being conceived by them as more 'with it' and 'macho' than the longer, older form, which may be regarded by them almost in the same way as the despised term 'bird-spotter', yet more respectable than the term 'twitcher'.

In current parlance, we aim to ensure that *British Birds* caters for the interests of many ornithologists, all birdwatchers and most birders. EDS



Announcements

'The Carl Zeiss Award' *Carl Zeiss Germany*, sponsor of the Rarities Committee, is offering an annual prize of *Carl Zeiss* 10 × 40B/GAT Dialyt, 7 × 42B/GAT or 7 × 45B 'Night Owl' binoculars to the photographer who supplies 'the most helpful, interesting and instructive' photograph of a rarity, taken in Britain. The photograph, a colour print, black-and-white print or transparency, must have been submitted (in the usual ways, via the relevant county bird recorder or directly to The Rarities Committee) with a description or set of descriptions which circulates to the Committee (or in time to circulate to the Committee with descriptions submitted by others).



The winning photograph may be big, bright, sharp and beautiful, or be small, dull, fuzzy and admired only by the Committee, but it will have included details which helped to clinch the identification of the bird in question and it may well have added to ornithological knowledge of the species' identification, ageing or sexing criteria. The winning photograph will be picked by the Chairman of the Rarities Committee and the Managing Editor of *British Birds* from a short-list selected during the year by the ten members of the Committee. The fourth Award will be made from among 1994 (and earlier) photographs of birds accepted for inclusion in the 1995 report. The winner will receive his or her prize at the British Birdwatching Fair in August 1995.

The aim of this award is to encourage the submission of potentially useful photographs to the Rarities Committee, for record assessment, as subsequent reference material, and for possible publication. Runners-up in the competition, and photographers whose rarity photographs have been selected for publication during the year (in the Rarities Report itself or in 'The ornithological year'), will each receive a sew-on woven badge incorporating the Carl Zeiss Award logo, in recognition of their contributions to the rarity assessment process. Each year, the winning photograph will be published in *British Birds*. The winner will be able to choose which *Carl Zeiss* binoculars he or she would prefer as a prize.

Bird Illustrator of the Year The closing date for this competition, which will again be sponsored by *Kowa* telescopes, is Wednesday 15th March 1995. Required dimensions of entries will henceforth be 18.6 cm wide × 20.85 cm deep (or 24.8 cm wide × 27.8 cm deep), 17.1 cm wide × 6.9 cm deep, and 8.25 cm wide × 6.0 cm deep.

Winning and many short-listed entries will, as usual, be displayed at The Mall Galleries during the Society of Wildlife Artists annual exhibition and subsequently at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water.

Bird Photograph of the Year The rules will be the same as those this year (*Brit. Birds* 87: 31), but the photographs must have been taken during 1994. There will again be an additional prize, the Windrush Photos Award, for the highest-placed photograph taken by an entrant aged under 21 years (please state date of birth if eligible). The closing date is 31st January 1995. Please send in your transparencies early.

Binding your 'BB' Standard book-binding of this year's volume costs £19.42 (incl. UK postage; add £8.00 per volume for overseas). Use the form on the back of the index. Old volumes can be rebound for £15.00 each. The binders' address is: London Journal Bindery, Roslin Road, London W3 8DH, telephone 0181-752 0552.



Diary dates

This list covers January to December 1995

6th-8th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. Details from BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

4th March SCOTTISH BIRDWATCHERS' ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. Borders Hotel, Galashiels. Details from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

10th-12th March RSPB/IRISH WILDBIRD CONSERVANCY ALL-IRELAND CONFERENCE. The Burrendale Hotel, Newcastle, Co. Down. 'Whose birds are they anyway?' Details from RSPB Northern Ireland Office, Belvoir Forest Park, Belfast BT8 1QR, Northern Ireland.

15th March Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'. *Note the new dimensions of drawings* (see page 629).

24th-26th March SEABIRD GROUP CONFERENCE 'Threats to seabirds.' Kelvin Conference Centre, Glasgow. Details from Bob Furness, Applied Ornithology Unit, Department of Zoology, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ.

25th March WELSH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY CONFERENCE. Aberystwyth. Details from Mike Shrubbs, Hillcrest, Llanwrtyd Wells, Powys LD5 4TL.

4th April ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON TUESDAY TALKS. Carl Jones on 'Conservation on the island of the dodo'. Details from The Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY.

21st-23rd April RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. University of York. Details from Yvonne Brown, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

2nd May ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON TUESDAY TALKS. Andy Rouse on 'Barn owls,

bears and badgers'.

20th-21st May BIRDATHON '94: YOC NATIONAL SPONSORED BIRDWATCH. Details from YOC.

4th July ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON TUESDAY TALKS. The Raffles Memorial Lecture: Sir Martin Holdgate on 'What future for nature?'.

27th July to 11th August SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission £2.00 (free to SWLA members).

18th-20th August BRITISH BIRDWATCHING FAIR. Egleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water, Leicestershire. Enquiries to Tim Appleton, Fishponds Cottage, Stamford Road, Oakham, Leicestershire LE15 8AB.

August OBC MEETING. Blakeney Village Hall, Blakeney, Norfolk. Details from OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

1st September Closing date for entries for 'Young Ornithologists of the Year'.

15th-21st September INTERNATIONAL WATERFOWL ECOLOGY SYMPOSIUM & WADER STUDY GROUP CONFERENCE. Aveiro, Portugal. Details from Rui Rufino, CEMPA/ICN, R. Filipe Folque 46, 5º, 1000 Lisboa, Portugal.

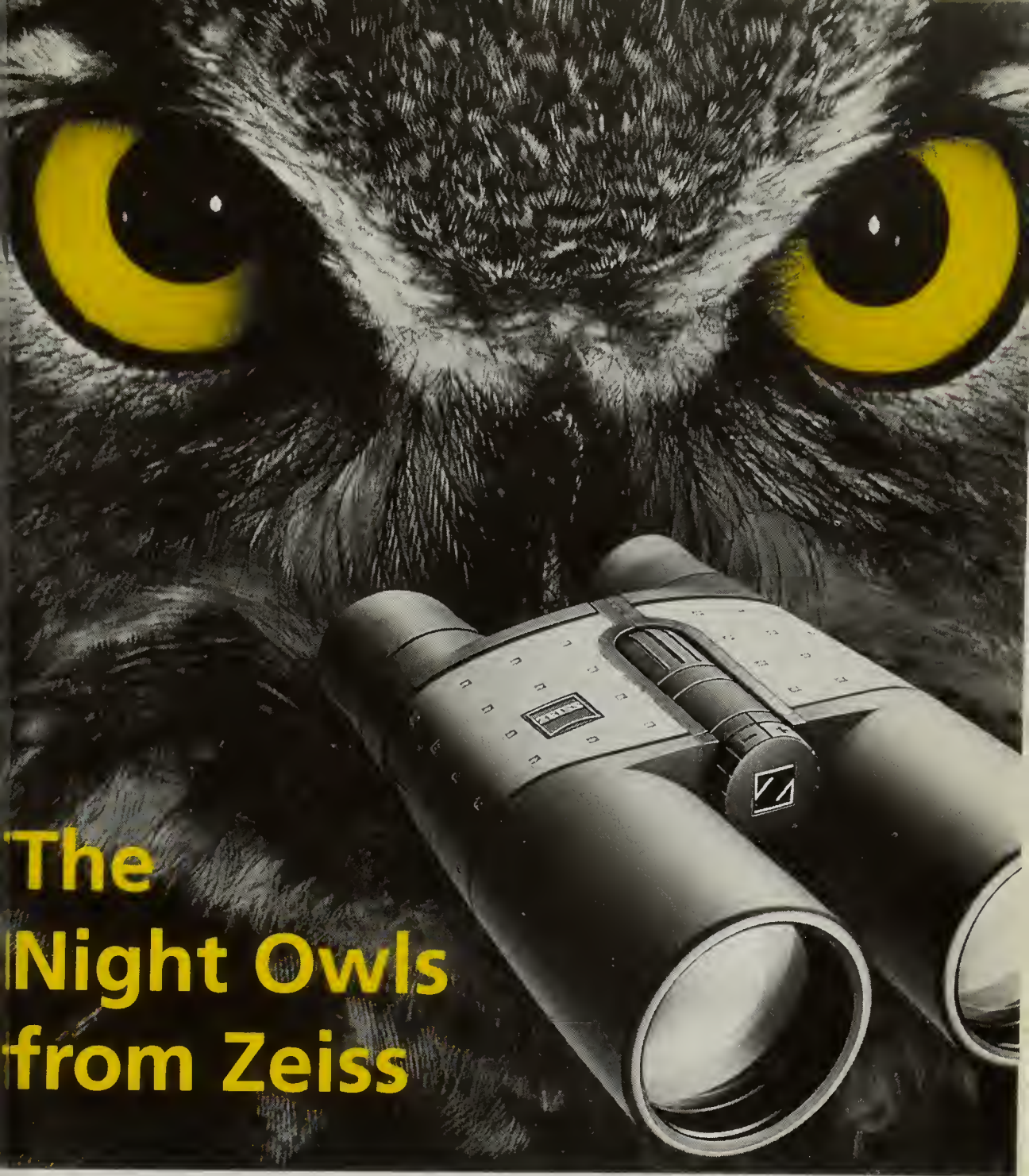
25th-29th September EUROPEAN BIRD CENSUS COUNCIL. Pärnu, Estonia.

30th September RSPB AGM. Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Westminster, London. Details from Yvonne Brown, RSPB.

8th-10th December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Swanwick. Details from BTO.

December OBC AGM. Zoological Society meeting rooms, Regent's Park, London. Details from OBC.

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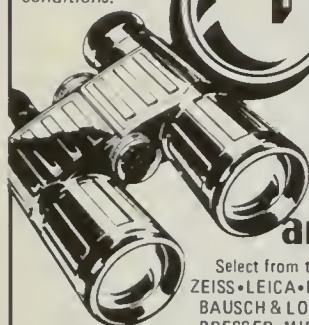
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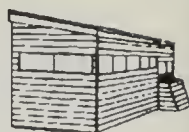
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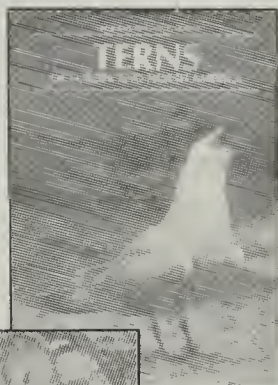
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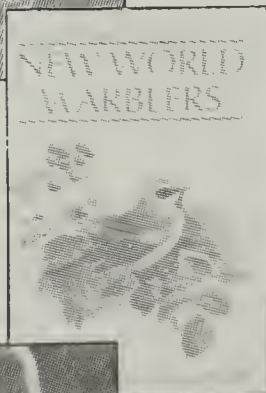
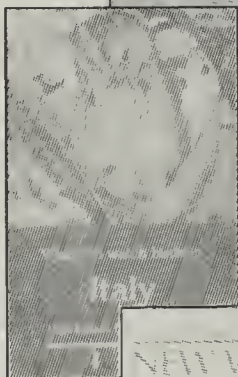


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Monthly marathon

The answers to the seventh and eighth stages in the current Marathon (plates 126 & 170) will be given in the January issue.

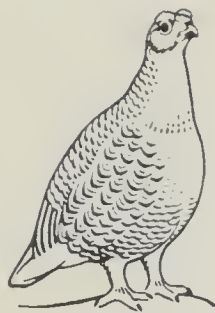
After the first six stages (plates 60, 72, 80, 94, 110 & 117), a bunch of 13 contestants is leading, having identified all six correctly: Mike Crewe (Suffolk), Ricard Gutierrez Benitez (Spain), M. A. Harris (Hertfordshire), Jon Holt (Buckinghamshire), Hannu Jännes (Finland), Heikki Luoto (Finland), Anthony McGeehan (Co. Down), Alain Rouge (France), Darryl Spittle (Surrey), Jakob Sunesen (Denmark), Peter Sunesen (Denmark), Jane Turner (Cheshire) and Heikki Vasamies (Finland); and two others are on their heels, each with a five-in-a-row series of correct answers: George Brown (Essex) and John Hampshire (Norfolk).

Plate 178 is the next stage. The first person to beat all other entrants, by achieving a ten-in-a-row (or longer) sequence of correct identifications, will win a SUNBIRD holiday to Africa, Asia or North America. Have a go! All the current leading runners might fail at one stage (it *has* happened in the past!), so it is not too late to start now.

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178. Seventh 'Monthly marathon', ninth stage: photo no. 102. Identify the species. Read the rules on pages 25-26 of the January 1993 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK14 3NJ, to arrive by 15th January 1995



Reviews

Ring Ouzels of the Yorkshire Dales. By Ian Appleyard. W. S. Mancy, Leeds, 1994. 60 pages; 80 colour photographs. ISBN 0-901286-40-0. £14.99.

Charismatic, of limited distribution, and in long-term decline—yet the Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* has been relatively neglected by ornithologists in spite of the current interest in upland birds. Ian Appleyard's monograph is a very personal account, aimed at the general naturalist, of his 15-year study of the species, presenting data on breeding biology gained from observations of 164 occupied nests. In some cases, an unattended video camera was used (not a recommended technique near to major cities!).

The author's 80 colour photographs set into the text make the book expensive. They include some fine portraits of Ring Ouzels, their habitat, a wide range of nest sites, and examples of interesting behaviour. As a ringer mainly familiar with this species in fresh autumn plumage, I was amazed how similar the sexes can look once abrasion and bleaching have been at work. The author suspects that this has sometimes led to confusion, such as reports of males incubating eggs.

Being the only published study of Ring Ouzels breeding in England, this is a valuable work giving much new information based on good sample sizes. Perhaps a little professional help in data presentation would not have come amiss (e.g. a map; clearer distinction between second and replacement clutches; some statistical analysis), but, on the whole, an attractive and informative publication.

ROY LEVERTON

An Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Cambridgeshire (Vice County 29) using 2 × 2 kilometre squares (tetrads) 1988-92. By P. M. M. Bircham, J. C. A. Rathmell & W. J. Jordan; with line-drawings by Richard Fowling. Cambridge Bird Club, Cambridge, 1994. 173 pages. ISBN 0-902038-05-2. Paperback £10.00.

This atlas is a credit not only to its compilers/authors and the members of the Cambridge Bird Club (and others) who carried out the fieldwork, but also to Cambridgeshire County Council and Anglian Water, who provided the sponsorship which was needed to assist with the publication.

The methods used were the standard ones as recommended by the former European Ornithological Atlas Committee (now European Bird Census Council), to 'allow comparison with other County Tetrad Atlases'. These comparisons are made in a table (Appendix 2) to show—for each species occurring in more than 5% of Cambridgeshire tetrads—the distribution as a percentage of the total number of tetrads, in Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire. The most widespread species in Cambridgeshire proved to be Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, followed by Blackbird *Turdus merula* and Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*.

As with all atlases, the maps themselves are the nitty-gritty. Presumably selected because of ease of plotting, confirmed, probable and possible breeding are shown by fully blacked-in squares, half-blacked-in squares (just the top right-hand triangle), and an oblique top-left-to-bottom-right diagonal line. The text claims that these symbols are used because different sizes of dot 'can be a cause for confusion' and the hope expressed that the new technique will be 'easier to interpret at a glance'. Unfortunately, to my eyes at least, the reverse is the case, and the neat, easily interpretable three sizes of dot would have been far tidier than these three dissimilar symbols. There is, however, never any doubt which symbol is intended in each tetrad, and choice of one or other method of displaying information is a matter of personal preference. Just over 100 species are mapped, with an average of slightly over one page per species (map plus short

interpretative text and, sometimes, a decorative line-drawing). Cambridgeshire can be divided roughly into two portions: the flat treeless northern fenland and the rather more undulating, higher chalk and boulder-clay areas of the south, where there is more woodland and also much more human habitation. Many of the maps of bird distributions reflect this difference (e.g. Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* mostly in the north, but Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* and Eurasian Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris* mostly in the south). It is interesting to note that the majority of Barn Owls *Tyto alba* were found in the northern fenland area.

As with all county, regional and national atlases, there is a vast amount of fascinating browsing material in this volume. Everyone with the remotest interest in the birds of the East Anglian region will each need to have a personal copy on their bookshelves. J. T. R. SHARROCK

A Birdwatcher's Guide to Malaysia. By John Bransbury. Waymark Publishing, Fullarton, 1993. 282 pages; 8 pages of colour plates; 45 maps. ISBN 0-646-14559-2. Paperback £14.00.

Malaysia possesses some of the richest and most accessible forests in Asia, yet this is its first comprehensive bird-finding guide. Some 42 sites are covered, ranging in size from city gardens and old mining pools to the mighty Taman Negara covering 4,300 km², and encompassing all the major habitats and most of the country's specialities. Twenty-six of the sites are on the peninsula of West Malaysia, and the remaining 16 on Borneo, in the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. Each site has an introduction, followed by sections on 'Good birdwatching areas', 'Birds' (listed by habitat), 'Access and accommodation', 'When to visit' and 'Other attractions'. The maps are usually helpful, though their sketchy style rather detracts from the otherwise high-quality production. A complete checklist of the birds and mammals concludes the book. This excellent guide is essential reading for anyone planning a serious birding trip to Malaysia. NIGEL REDMAN

Birds and Seasons. By Eric Ennion. Arlequin Press, Chelmsford, 1994. 150 pages; 70 colour paintings; over 90 line-drawings. ISBN 0-9522019-33. £55.00.

Although occupying a unique place among twentieth-century wildlife artists, the work of Eric Ennion (1900-1981) has never reached as wide an audience as it truly deserves.

His style was highly individual. He did not paint feather-perfect portraits of birds frozen solidly at a moment in time, but conveyed the hidden rhythms of nature and essential characteristics of a particular subject which lie beyond the superficial appearance and 'fussiness' of surface detail. That conviction jumps out from the paintings in the book, some of which have not been published before.

He never left home without sketchpad and pencils, and during a lifetime in the field took a naturalist's delight and used his artist's eye to focus quickly on any and every encounter—be it with bird, butterfly, moth, flowering plant, spider or panoramic landscape.

The paintings are accompanied by wonderfully written essays, which are not only fascinating natural history anecdotes (Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* nesting in Cambridgeshire on railway embankments, long ago), but are also colourful insights into the life of the man. Subjects range from 'Crossbills and Apple Pies' (staying at a Breckland farm as a boy in about 1905), to 'Dovekies and Burgomasters' (East Coast sea-watching in winter during the 1950s).

Although the book might seem too highly priced at first, it does not take long to realise that it is so full of treasures, and the production makes it feel and look like something so very special, that the price is quite appropriate. The book is fabulous, and I could write a much longer essay on its merits. BRUCE PEARSON

Moult and Ageing of European Passerines. By Lukas Jenni & Rafael Winkler. Academic Press, London, 1994. 235 pages; about 700 photographs, line-drawings and figures. ISBN 0-12-384150-X. £40.00.

What this is not, first of all, is a 'photographic Svensson': it is not an identification guide to passerines in the hand in colour photographs. We have details, for instance, of Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*, but not Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae*; of Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, but not Melodious Warbler *H. polyglotta*. There are 58 species accounts, but it does not pretend to be complete; nor, indeed, are accounts and photographs necessarily intended to be compared between species.

What the book does, as the title accurately reflects, is show the visible signs of moult and age as they progress within each species: comparisons are intended to be made between juveniles and first-years, breeding males and post-breeding females and so on, within each species. Understanding the moult strategies, rather than using plumage details to tell one species from another in the hand, is the unique aim of this large-format book, which is a real tour de force.

It is not, to me, a mere non-ringer, an easy read: it is not a subject to become familiar with by browsing through a text like this, or looking at the pictures and hoping to become an expert on moult. To be honest, this is a difficult book, because the subject is complex and requires much concentration. It is, though, all here, within the small print. The introductory pages deal comprehensively with the functions of moult; the energetic consequences of moult and the need to fit this important function into the annual cycle; the terminology of feathers (especially regarding the wings), plumages and moult classes; and the varied sequences of moults and alternative moult strategies adopted by European passerines. A valuable practical section deals with ageing, before the species accounts, which present a really remarkable set of photographs of upperwings, mostly taken from trapped, live birds in laboratory conditions.

The wings are opened, lightly taped down and photographed, so that many look like exceptionally neat specimens rather than living birds' wings. A problem is that some patterns are so subtle that it is still, despite the excellence of the image, difficult to separate individual feathers: sometimes one would like to slip a finger tip under a feather edge to lift it and see precisely what is what, but on a photograph that is not possible.

The coverage is remarkable, with six or eight pictures for most species, and 13 or 15 for complicated cases such as Siskin *Carduelis spinus* or Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*. It is not always, for me at least, easy to see everything that is pointed out by the explanatory captions: some important changes that indicate the limits of moult (edges or centres of feathers showing different colours or textures) are extremely subtle, perhaps partly a function of the light (from a ring-flash) during photography. The species texts amplify the photographic coverage and are both full and thoroughly researched, but again are not easy browsing material: it is as well to be prepared for some work to get the best out of them.

This is a revealing and enlightening book, dealing with the theory and process of moult, especially in relation to migration, and the individual strategies that are adopted to accomplish it. The authors demonstrate a commendable ability to distil the results of 15 years of study and have produced something truly original.

ROB HUME

Where to Watch Birds in Yorkshire and North Humberside. By John R. Mather. Christopher Helm Publishers, London, 1994. 298 pages; 79 location maps; 26 line-drawings. ISBN 0-7136-3933-4. £12.99.

A long-awaited addition to the 'Where to Watch Birds' series, covering the largest county in Britain, well documented by John Mather. John has been actively involved in recording the birds within the county for the last 41 years and wrote *The Birds of Yorkshire* (1986). This new book now goes into detail on the many sites from which these records originated.

The book is well set out, with the county being divided into 11 sections, ranging from the well-watched east coast to some of the quieter locations in the dales and valleys of the west. Each of these sections is then further divided into the individual sites or groups of closely associated sites and these are dealt with under the headings of habitat, species (site specialities), timing (important for migrants), access and calendar (a species list).

This is an invaluable book for visitors to the county, as it has some of the best directions to the sites that I have seen, backed by simple but effective maps. Indeed, many of the county's birders, including myself, will find it useful to visit the areas of which we have heard, but which we have never visited.

PETER J. DUNN

The Barn Owl. By Colin Shawyer. Hamlyn, London, 1994. 128 pages; 16 colour plates; 4 colour paintings; 20 line-drawings. ISBN 0-600-57949-2. Paperback £9.99.

This series of neat, classy-looking small paperbacks has already established a niche, presenting information in a more expansive, readable style than the dense small print of BHP, but in a less

intensive, shorter form than a full monograph in the Poyser style. In *The Barn Owl*, Colin Shawyer hits the mark very well with his combination of an easy, clear and readable style (only the Preface really drifts into the purple end of the spectrum) and a decently large helping of facts and figures.

The chapters focus on the bird's appearance and morphology, a short history of the species in the UK (revealing a fascinating link with the old-fashioned and long-gone stackyards of grain heaving with small rodents) and a résumé of the species' distribution and numbers in Europe (briefly) and the UK in particular. As expected, habitat, food and hunting techniques, territory, voice, social behaviour and breeding biology get the usual treatment (all well done), followed by short chapters on moult, lifespan, mortality and causes of decline (especially interesting in view of all the attention this species has attracted) and conservation.

The odd thing, perhaps, is that, for this most widespread of landbirds, the book is almost all confined to the Barn Owl in Britain, and the chance to talk a little about Barn Owls in outlandish places, from Egyptian pyramids and desert fringes to African grasslands, Pacific islands and various New World habitats, let alone the racial variations within its range (which are mapped) and its relationships with other owls, has been missed. Most of the readership of this book will no doubt be happier with the more parochial view.

This is a fine book, with Dan Powell's lively line-drawings, Hilary Burn's evocative paintings and many appropriate photographs brightening up many of its pages.

ROB HUME

Illustrated Guide to the Birds of Southern Africa. By Ian Sinclair, Phil Hockey & Warwick Tarboton. Illustrated by Peter Hayman & Norman Arlott. New Holland, London, 1993. 426 pages; 202 colour plates; numerous maps. ISBN 1-85368-281-0. £19.99.

African bird guides are a mixed lot. Kenneth Newman cornered the market in the south, with a series based on his excellent *Newman's Birds of Southern Africa*. This book will be compared with Newman's, but in truth stands on its own as a huge step forward in bird guides for the continent: it brings them bang up to date.

It is largely the illustrations that attract such praise; some of the text is needlessly brief. While concise, it sometimes fails to match modern standards of precision, and difficult groups or pairs remain unclear. That is probably an unfair European perception; no doubt familiar, easy birds in southern Africa are thought to merit less-full treatment, but for a visitor it is frustrating, common birds being just as complex as rare ones. The excellent family introductions avoid repetition of information, but need to be remembered. Illustrations indicate subtle differences that the text fails to mention (such as the broader wing of African Cuckoo *Cuculus gularis* compared with European *C. canorus*), leaving the reader unsure of their significance, but thinking that there must be more characters than the text implies.

The illustrations truly break new ground. Peter Hayman at last has the chance to go to town on birds of prey. We have them in superb detail in all plumages: true, most are 'diagrammatic' from above or below, but numerous smaller images bring them to life. The essential 'maps' are invaluable, the like of which have never before been published for most species. Now we can see surprisingly different shapes of Augur *Buteo augur* and Jackal Buzzards *B. rufofuscus*, Pale *Melierax canorus* and Dark Chanting Goshawks *M. metabates* and African accipiters. Birds of prey alone occupy 31 packed plates, including six brilliant double-page spreads.

Most groups get the full Hayman treatment, with beautifully painted, measured drawings of, for example, the petrels, the larks (complete with upperwings, underwings, spread tails), the hirundines, the nightjars, cuckoos, doves—even, heaven help us, cisticolas. Some are the best Peter Hayman has given us and, while a few pages have a certain stiffness (including, oddly enough, some of the waders most of us are so familiar with through *Shorebirds*), many are really beautiful. Look at the coucals, the kingfishers of page 251, the superb quails and the exquisite quartet of Red-necked Francolins *Francolinus afer* across the middle of page 133, for example.

Norman Arlott's work is beautifully done; the widows and whydahs are magnificent pieces of design and execution. Using a softer, Newman-like style, he paints bigger, more varied images, less measured and diagrammatic. This works well and combines easily with the others, but once or twice misses the point—the text mentions the shorter tail of Wood Pipit *Anthus nyassae* compared with Long-billed *A. similis*, for example, but it is shown half facing us. The Grassveld Pipit *A. cinnamomeus*, incidentally, on the same page, would be known to most of us as Richard's *A. novaeseelandiae*, but here the authors split the two.

This book rewards close study: it is rich in new information for the enthusiastic traveller and a joy to browse through. While admiring the paintings we remember what great birds there are there, which must ultimately help their conservation.

ROB HUME

Barn Owls: predator-prey relationships and conservation. By Iain Taylor. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994. 304 pages; 46 black-and-white plates; 19 line-drawings. ISBN 0-521-39290-X. £19.95.

This is by far the most comprehensive study of Barn Owls *Tyto alba* yet published. The author carried out a long-term study of the species in four areas of southern Scotland during 1978-92 and has compared his results with work on Barn Owls elsewhere in the world.

The greater part of the book sets out in a clear and readable text the different aspects of Barn Owl breeding biology and ecology, examining the many factors affecting reproduction and mortality and how the birds relate to their habitat and to their prey. The last two chapters explore the nature and causes of population change, most of the latter, sadly, being downward, since Barn Owls are declining worldwide, not just in Britain, with loss of foraging habitat, loss of nest sites and the use of rodenticides all involved. The book closes on a more upbeat note with descriptions of what to do to manage habitat, to provide new nest sites and to reduce mortality, using examples of where these practices are already being carried out, including successful nest-box provision in Malaysian oil-palm plantations, in coastal marshlands in Maryland, USA, and on farmland in the Netherlands, as well as closer to home in the author's own study area.

This book deserves to be very widely read, not just by those willing to take active steps to help but also by anyone wanting to know more about this beautiful bird.

MALCOLM OGILVIE

The Swallow. By Angela Turner. Illustrated by Hilary Burn & Norman Arlott. Hamlyn, London, 1994. 128 pages; 24 colour plates; 30 line-drawings. ISBN 0-600-57979-4. Paperback £9.99.

This is a most readable account, clearly distilled from a deep knowledge of the species. All aspects of the life of the Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* are covered—distribution and movements, food, social behaviour and breeding, including in the latter the most recent information on the uninhibited sex life of the species, involving promiscuity, egg-dumping and infanticide. This text is enhanced by the breadth of coverage, with information drawn not only from western Europe, but also from North America and Asia, all supported by a wealth of beautiful colour photographs and drawings, all well reproduced. There is a fascinating amount of detail, though it must be said at the cost of an extremely small typeface that makes reading a bit of a strain. *The Swallow* deserves a wide readership, particularly at its modest price.

While Dr Turner has done an excellent job, I am more concerned about her brief. At whom is the series aimed? It certainly brings the arid pages of *BWP* to life, but one is left with the frustration of not being able to identify the original sources. If this does not worry you, *The Swallow* is clearly an excellent buy.

J. DENIS SUMMERS-SMITH

BIRDING Plus. vol. 1. Otus, Boston, 1994. Video £12.99.

Adding to the seemingly endless variety of ways to part birders from their money is this latest concept—a video 'magazine'. Footage of rare (and rarish) birds seen in Britain between January and July 1994 takes up 46 minutes of the total running time of one hour 22 minutes. My favourite sequences were of Corn Crakes *Crex crex* and Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*, both thankfully without the distracting piano music which provides background to much of the rest.

Other features include 12 minutes covering an organised tour to Antarctica, and eight minutes spotlighting The Hawk and Owl Trust. These, with the rarity footage, fit comfortably into the video format, apart, that is, from the seven minutes spent on 'still' shots. Coverage also includes eight minutes on book, video and product reviews, and seven minutes on the ubiquitous competition. Here I confess that, if I had not been viewing for this review, I would probably have reached for the fast-forward button.

The four, quarterly issues will cost nearly twice as much as conventional bird magazines, and for the rare-bird footage there are established versions already on the market.

I applaud this initiative, however, and the impressive list of credits reflects the generally high standard of the photography.

BARRY NIGHTINGALE



First BirdLife International conference

NOT ALTOGETHER TRUE, for under its previous incarnation this would have been the 21st World Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation.

For nine days, during 11th-19th August 1994, 400 delegates from 80 countries attended a full and packed conference in Rosenheim, Germany. Coupled with the Conference was the publication of two very impressive documents: 'Action Review 1990-1994: BirdLife International' and 'Important Bird Areas in the Middle East'.

Amongst the important work undertaken during the Conference was the signing by a further 14 national conservation organisations of the 'Declaration of Intent', which commits them to becoming a full partner within BirdLife. There is now a potential total of 53 partners within BirdLife, a truly global conservation representation. A resolution was adopted that formally dissolved ICBP and passed its assets and liabilities to BirdLife, this conference being the first opportunity in BirdLife's 18-month existence for the legal changes to take place.

It is particularly pleasing to note that Ian Prestt was elected BirdLife's first Member of Honour in recognition of his contribution to ICBP and BirdLife.

The 'Action Review', in addition to describing the BirdLife partnership, explains the importance, in global terms, of setting priorities and, once set, acting for them and advocating them as widely as possible. The latter is achieved through many mechanisms, and in 1993 a 'WORLD BIRDWATCH' was organised in which over 270 societies and groupings from 100 countries participated. It was so successful that it is intended to hold another 'WORLD BIRDWATCH' event in October 1995.

One of the cornerstones of BirdLife's work is the 'Important Bird Areas', a recording system that identifies all the most important ornithological sites throughout the world. This is achieved by combining data on endemic and threatened birds with information on areas known to host large numbers of individuals, species of regional importance, or distinctive bird communities. The Middle East has now been catalogued: 391 sites that are of global or regional importance for birds in the Middle East include the vast migratory flyway that passes through the area and onwards along the Rift Valley into Africa; the immensely rich wildlife sites in the mountains of southwest Arabia; and the fantastic seabird colonies on the islands in the Gulf. The conservation programme for the Middle East was agreed by representatives from Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Further details may be obtained from BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA.

IOC comes of age

Every four years, ornithologists from across the world gather to discuss their work at the International Ornithological Congress (IOC). With some 1,500 full members, the 21st IOC, which took place in Vienna during 20th-25th August this year, was one of the largest international scientific meetings for ornithologists ever held. Vienna was chosen for this anniversary meeting because the first IOC was held there in 1884. Unlike the first IOC, however, which was held in the University, this Congress took place in the awesome staterooms of the Hofburg Palace, former home to the Hapsburg empire.

The IOC is a supremely exciting event to attend. With 12 plenary lectures, more than 50 symposia and 60 round-table discussion groups, covering every aspect of ornithology from the applied to the esoteric, more than 200 poster presentations, a full programme of film presentations, visits to local sites of ornithological interest (Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* could be seen in the Vienna parks), and the chance to sample the best of ornithological publishing and optical design, all packed into just five days, there was no time to be idle; and all this in the most extraordinary architectural setting. The 21st IOC must be considered a wonderful success.

Magnificent as all this was, though, it has to be said that the Emperor Franz Josef's architect never had twentieth-century conferences in mind, and the Congress organisers found that their venue presented problems of a proportion matched only by that of the Hofburg Palace itself. It is easy to find fault when, for example, the venue took so great a part of the conference fee that virtually nothing was left for food; when tens of poster submissions were omitted from the published abstracts, when the

geography of the building was such that symposia were often disrupted by people trooping through to other meetings because no alternative access was available for them; when speakers almost invariably found that projector controls did not work, that it was rarely possible to show both slides and overhead projection because only one screen was available, and that in one room the screen was actually too low to be seen and all its scheduled symposia had to be moved into the Festsaal – the main banqueting hall. This room, of quite overwhelming proportions, quite capable of accommodating the full conference for plenary lectures, was rather wasted on the 70 or so that attended most of the transferred symposia. Yes, it is easy to find fault. Certainly, presenting my little talk on Great Tits *Parus major* in this extraordinary room, with its exuberantly painted ceilings, peculiar audio-visual qualities and faulty projector control, is an experience that will see me into my dotage. Nor will we forget the final get-together: an hour-long queue for *al fresco* schnitzels in a force-8 gale at the zoo, then queue again for a drink!

OK, any large meeting is an organisational nightmare, but the purpose of a conference is to confer, to renew old acquaintances, make new contacts, discuss work with colleagues. In this, the nineteenth-century Disneyland that is Vienna was a fine setting, and, with such good attendance, the opportunities for discussion were many and varied.

The 21st IOC will not quickly be forgotten, but I hope that the organisers, who clearly worked immensely hard to make the event a success, will forgive me if I say that, with hindsight, perhaps its success was *in spite* of the Hofburg rather than *because* of it. (Contributed by Andy Gössler)

Iceland's Americans

On 3rd September 1994, the first Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* was found in Iceland. It is surprising that it was only the first one for the country in view of the many Baird's Sandpipers that have been recorded in Britain.

Birdwatchers in Iceland have been looking for this species for many years. A thorough search started in 1977, and since then birders have found 40 White-rumped Sandpipers *C. fuscicollis*, 23 Pectoral Sandpipers *C. melanotos*, seven American Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica*, seven Buff-breasted Sandpipers *Tryngites*

subruficollis, four Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, three Semipalmated Sandpipers *C. pusilla*, three Spotted Sandpipers *Actitis macularia*, three Long-billed Dowitchers *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, two Least Sandpipers *C. minutilla*, two Wilson's Phalaropes *Phalaropus tricolor*, one Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus*, and one Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus*, but only this one Baird's Sandpiper (which is, of course, still awaiting formal verification by the Icelandic rarities committee). (Contributed by Gimmlaugur Pétursson)

Talaud and Sangihe

Interest in eastern ornithology is undoubtedly growing within Britain, witness the success of the Oriental Bird Club (*Brit. Birds* 87: 448) and the concentration on raising money for the Halmahera project at this year's British Birdwatching Fair (*Brit. Birds* 87: 574).

Here are ten species, listed in the 'BirdLife Directory of Endemic Bird Areas', that may not be familiar to British birders: Elegant Imperial Pigeon *Ducula concinna*, Grey Imperial Pigeon *D. pickeringii*, Red-and-blue Lory *Eos histrio*, Sangihe Hanging Parrot *Loriculus catamene*, Lilac-cheeked Kingfisher *Cittura cyanotis*, Sulawesi Kingfisher *Ceyx fallax*, Talaud Kingfisher *Todirhamphus enigma*, Pied Cuckooshrike *Coracina bicolor*, Caerulean Paradise-flycatcher *Eutrichomyias rowleyi* and Elegant Sunbird *Aethopyga duyvenbodei*.

What have these in common? They are found on the islands of Talaud and Sangihe, Indonesia, and they are all target species for the University of York Talaud and Sangihe Ornithological Expedition planned for July 1995. A team from the University is planning to visit the islands to investigate the threatened endemic avifauna of the area. The 12-week project will survey the habitat and study the ecology of the key species. Students from the UK and Indonesia will be involved in the fieldwork, which will take place both in primary forest and on agricultural land. The expedition will cost about £15,000. To make a contribution or to receive more information, contact Jon Riley, Expedition Leader, c/o Department of Biology, University of York, Heslington, York YO1 5DD.

Black-throated Diver rafts

The UK breeding population of Black-throated Divers *Gavia arctica* numbers only some 150 pairs and is confined to Scotland, particularly the Highlands. In recent years, the breeding success has been poor, the result of a number of factors, but including human disturbance and flooded nests as a result of suddenly changing water levels. The RSPB, in some of the remotest parts of Scotland, and with the co-operation of several landowners and the help of many volunteers, has developed floating diver rafts. These have been so successful that not only are the divers fooled, but many human visitors to the lochs also cannot believe that they are not natural. Some 17% of the population now nests on the rafts, where they are three times more successful than pairs nesting in 'natural' sites.

YOC members tackle tackle

In May and June 1994, and with the help of the National Federation of Anglers, the YOC organised a project (Tackle Tackle) to discover how clean the river and canal banks and beaches and lakesides were. A total of 23 km of water's edge was searched by the young volunteers. The finds included nearly 100 m of fishing line, 58 lead weights, 92 tungsten weights, 39 hooks and nine floats. These figures seem quite frightening, but the good news is that, compared with similar surveys carried out in 1979, 1983 and 1989, there is now less discarded line, less lead and fewer hooks. We must hope that the situation continues to improve.

The black spots for line were Loch Ardingning, Glasgow; Stroudwater Canal, Gloucestershire; and Little Paxton Pits, Cambridgeshire (the latter a Local Nature Reserve!). The worst site for weights was Legamuton Lake, Staffordshire; and, for hooks, Chesil Beach, Dorset. The cleanest areas were the River Lea at Ware, Hertfordshire; the Aylesbury Canal at Marsworth, Buckinghamshire; and the River Severn near Apperley, Gloucestershire.

It is particularly pleasing to see the National Federation of Anglers working so closely with such a project. Further information and a copy of the report from YOC, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Extension to Scottish reserve

The RSPB has recently announced a 500-acre (200-ha) extension to its Insh Marshes Nature Reserve, Highland. Thanks to a generous grant from Scottish Natural Heritage, the Society now manages a land holding of some four square miles (10 km²) on each side of the River Spey between Kingussie and Loch Insh. This is one of Britain's most important sites for breeding wildfowl, with some 700 pairs of waders and 500 pairs of ducks. Most notable are breeding Common Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula* and Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana* and wintering Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus*. The area also holds important populations of otter *Lutra lutra* and Arctic charr *Salvelinus alpinus*, together with rich wetland plant and invertebrate communities. The critical management of the site will be achieved by letting the grazing to local farmers (nearly 1,500 head of livestock will be needed), coupled with ditch maintenance to maintain open water and, where necessary, annual mowing of vegetation.

Bucks book for Chancellor



179. The Rt Hon. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kenneth Clarke—Buckinghamshire resident, birdwatcher and long-time *BB* subscriber—being presented with a copy of *The Birds of Buckinghamshire* by President of the Buckinghamshire Bird Club, Mrs Susan Cowdy, accompanied by the book's co-editor, David Ferguson. The book proudly bears the sticker designating it as 'Recommended by British Birds', having been a runner-up to *The New Atlas* for the title 'Best Bird Book of the Year'.

Fun day at Conwy

The new RSPB reserve at Conwy has been created out of silt excavated during construction of the Conwy road tunnel, which runs beneath the estuary, and then, unfortunately, dumped on saltmarsh. It is developing into an important roost site for waders, with a good variety of species now breeding on or visiting the reserve on this beautiful estuary. The Conwy reserve, just off the A55, was the focus of a Family Day on 20th August, when games, puppet shows, the YOC Roadshow, guided walks, talks, a film show and a host of other activities took place there and in the town. Many of the events were organised by reserve warden Dave Elliott and volunteers from the North Wales Members' Group. A wide variety of waders was taking advantage of the new scrapes, while visitors also saw the reserve in a new perspective when they enjoyed a riverboat journey up the River Conwy. It is hoped that the new reserve centre will be open at the end of the year, offering even more people the chance to see what can be created from discarded spoil. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

Antony Witherby (1915-1994)

The publishing house Witherby & Co was noted by *The Daily Telegraph* as being 'probably the oldest private company in Britain to have passed from father to son since its inception', which was in 1740. *British Birds* owes its existence to the Witherby family, in particular to Harry Forbes Witherby, who founded the journal in June 1907. He also initiated the marking scheme which has become the BTO's Ringing Scheme, and was the senior compiler of the trail-blazing *Practical Handbook* which led to *The Handbook of British Birds*, which, like *BB*, was published by H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd. Harry Witherby died in 1943 (*Brit. Birds* 36: 162-174), but the publishing company continued, under the sympathetic guidance of Harry Witherby's nephew, George Witherby's son, Antony Witherby.

Fishing rather than ornithology was Tony Witherby's passion, but—whether to maintain a tradition, in respect for the memory of his uncle, or as a service to the birding community—he kept *BB* going not only through the difficult war years, as *BB* shrank to a meagre 250 pages per annum during 1942-44, but for a total of 30 years until 'growing pressures of his many other business

commitments' resulted in *BB* leaving the Witherby stable in 1973 to become a Macmillan journal (before becoming independent in 1980). The friendly link with Witherby continued, however, and it was only a year ago that Antony Witherby transferred to *BB*'s care photographs, papers and other archive material from the years 1907-72 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 445). It was with great sadness, therefore, that we heard of the passing of Antony Witherby on 7th August, at the age of 79. His many achievements were noted in full obituaries in *The Daily Telegraph* of 3rd September and *The Times* of 8th September. In the former, he was described as 'a shrewd and clever man, (but) he often gave the impression, which he much enjoyed, of being a vague and incompetent eccentric.' We believe that he would especially have appreciated as his epitaph the statement there that he 'was popular with authors, who knew that their books would be fairly appraised and, if published, kept in print for much longer than other publishers would have deemed economically feasible.'

We mourn the passing of an old friend.
(JTRS & PADH)

Derek Barnard Cutts (1926-1994)

News of the sudden death of Derek Cutts at South Cave in North Humberside on 30th August 1994, in his 68th year, saddened all who knew this quiet, unassuming yet humorous man.

His tireless work with the birds of the Humber Estuary, and particularly The Humber Wildfowl Refuge, of which he was Chairman for eight years and a mainstay in its furtherance, together with his close friend and associate, the late Brian Pashby, won him respect and admiration amongst birdwatchers and wildfowlers alike.

He was well known for his involvement with *The Atlas of Breeding Birds* (1976), for which he was regional organiser for the whole of the old East Riding of Yorkshire, and he was also the BTO Representative for the same area. The Birds of Estuaries Enquiry, organised by the BTO, occupied him for 17 years, during which time he collated records for the north bank of the Humber Estuary.

His professional life as an architect culminated with the post of Deputy Chief Architect for the City of Hull. On taking early retirement in 1986, he broadened his interests, operating a moth trap and creating a large pond in his garden, on which he was working when he died.

My earliest recollection of our friendship was watching with him Yorkshire's first Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* at Wheldrake Ings in April 1967. More recently, he provided willing assistance and advice on the Upper Humber Estuary for my book *Where to Watch Birds in Yorkshire and North Humberside* (1994).

He will be missed by those who knew and worked with him, and the thoughts of us all are extended to his wife, Molly, and their son, Niek. (Contributed by John R. Mather)

New species for Britain

In about 1890, a specimen of an ant-lion (Myrmeleonidae) was collected near Westleton, Suffolk. The identity of this specimen is not quite certain. Ant-lions, of which there are about 40 European species, have some similarity to dragonflies and are mainly confined to the Mediterranean area. Until now, this was the only British record. On 21st July 1994, two specimens of *Euroleon nostras* were recorded at the Minsmere Reserve, close to Westleton, Suffolk. In early September, a third example was recorded at the same locality. Is there in fact a small British colony that has gone undetected since the latter years of the last century?

Controlling Canada Geese

The Department of the Environment has recently distributed a leaflet produced by the Canada Goose Working Group, detailing legal control methods for Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* in Britain. Information is given on options for control that do not require a licence and options that do require a licence. Licences may be granted only for the following purposes: to conserve wild birds; to protect any collection of wild birds; to preserve public health or public or air safety; and to prevent serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber or fisheries. It is worth mentioning, however, the options that do not require a licence: to take no action; to scare away from the site; to adjust the habitat; to erect fencing; to discourage feeding; and to undertake shooting in the open season.

The leaflet 'Canada Geese: a guide to legal control methods' is obtainable from DoE, Room 908 Tollgate House, Houlton Street, Bristol BS2 9DJ; phone Bristol (0272) 878700.

January issue

Please remember that the January issue of *BB* is always posted in mid January rather than in late December. A few panic-stricken subscribers phone us early each January about non-receipt of the first issue of the year.

If your address label was red, you will have received a renewal reminder with this issue; it would help the efficient distribution of next year's *BB* if you returned the form to us as soon as possible. Thank you. (Erika Sharrock)

ID coming up

Next year will be a busy one for *BB* identification buffs, with papers already written and illustrated or 'in the pipeline' (in press or in prep.) on Western Reef *Egretta gularis* and Little Egrets *E. garzetta*, Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Little *Porzana parva* and Baillon's Crakes *P. pusilla*, Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*, Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*, Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Pied *Oenanthe pleschanka* and Cyprus Pied Wheatears *O. cyprica*, all the *Hippolais* warblers, Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*, and Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*.

The authors concerned include David Christie, Peter Clement, Philippe J. Dubois, Peter Flint, Martin Garner, Alan Harris, Ren Hathway, Rob Hume, Tim Inskipp, Peter Lansdown, David Quinn, Hadoram Shirihai, Brian Small and Pierre Yésou.

Carl Zeiss Award winner

Smiles all around when this year's winner of The Carl Zeiss Award, Dr Adrian Wander, received the Zeiss 7 x 45B 'Night Owl' binoculars which he selected as his prize (plate 180).

Dr Wander's winning photograph was the Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* flashing its yellow-webbed feet at sea off Scilly (*Brit. Birds* 87: 434-435, plate 111).



180. THE CARL ZEISS AWARD: Dr Adrian Wander (left) receives his Zeiss 7 x 45B 'Night Owl' binoculars from British Birds Rarities Committee Chairman, Rob Hume, at the British Birdwatching Fair, Rutland Water, August 1994 (Jim Norwood)

OPA Awards

The magazine *Bird Watching* has announced its Optical Product Awards for 1994, judged by Roger Tidman, Chris Knights, Ian Lewington and David Cottridge. The winning products were:

BINOCULARS OF THE YEAR

- (over £300) *Leica* 8 x 32B
- (£150-£300) *Swift* Ultralite 8 x 42
- (under £150) *Bushnell* Natureview 8 x 42
- (compact) *Leica* 10 x 25

TELESCOPES OF THE YEAR

- (over £350) *Nikon* 78mm ED
- (under £350) *Kowa* TS 611

ACCESSORY OF THE YEAR

- Nikon* 30 x wide-angle eye-piece

TRIPODS OF THE YEAR

- (over £70) *Cullman* 3300
- (under £70) *Velbon* CX-680

Among the Highly Commended runners-up was the Zeiss Night Owl 7 x 45 (the model chosen by Dr Adrian Wander as his prize for winning this year's Carl Zeiss Award). We

quote from the *Bird Watching* report: '**Zeiss Night Owls 7 x 45** This model picked up more points for optical performance than any other contender, the judges being particularly impressed by the wide field of view and knock-out brightness. But the large size and weight counted against these German-built optics, as the judges felt many birdwatchers would find them tiring to use all day.'

These assessments of the newest models by a small, expert panel usefully complement the periodic polls of grass-roots opinion provided by our *British Birds* surveys of binoculars and telescopes (*Brit. Birds* 71: 429-439; 76: 155-161; 78: 167-175; 81: 149-160; 84: 267-282). The most recent of these rated the Zeiss 10 x 40B as the top binoculars for the future and the Kowa TSN-3/TSN-4 x 77 as the top telescope for the future.

Please participate in our newest survey (see page 622 and pull-out centre section) which can be returned by FREEPOST.

Dunstable Sewage Treatment Works now . . .

The successful partnership between Anglian Water and the Bedfordshire Natural History Society, at Dunstable Sewage Treatment Works in Bedfordshire, is now well into its second year. With four shallow settlement lagoons and a purpose-built wader-scrape, the emphasis is very much on providing a safe feeding and breeding area for wildfowl and waders in what is largely a dry, farming district. Funding from Anglian Water has enabled additional shingle for capping the main scrape island, which was duly carried out by the Society's members during winter work parties.

In 1994, four pairs of Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* bred around the site (two pairs on the scrape), raising ten young to the flying stage, along with breeding Common Redshanks *Tringa totanus*, Ringed Plovers *C. hiaticula* and Common Terns *Sterna hirundo*. The wader passage was greatly enhanced by Anglian Water's flexibility in lowering one of the football-pitch-size lagoons, at the request of the Society, giving a muddy, wader-friendly margin for a variety of species.

Apart from regular visits by the Society's birders, the site is increasingly enjoyed by local organisations, such as Scouts and RSPB members' groups, and throughout the year on the first Sunday morning of each month a wardening system enables any interested individual to visit the works.

So, the future looks good for birdlife in a tiny corner of Bedfordshire in what is a fine example of how industry and local conservationists can combine for the benefit of all.
(Contributed by Paul Trodd, Honorary Warden)

. . . and 30 years ago

Our East Anglian correspondent, Barrie Harding, has drawn our attention to the headlines in several national newspapers in 1964 that 'Council Bans Bird Watcher' (*The Evening News*), 'Gunmen ban the bird man' (*The People*) and so on. Barrie Harding himself was that banned bird man, when a shooting syndicate complained to Dunstable Council that he was spoiling their sport for them at Dunstable Sewage-farm. The happy outcome was that, following an outcry, both locally and nationally, the syndicate had their permission rescinded and Barrie's was reinstated.

Bardsey's brilliant

We were delighted recently to get a letter from Simon Patient, who was second in the senior section of Young Ornithologists of the Year competition in 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 45)*. Simon was also a recipient of one of the four bursaries awarded by the Society of Wildlife Artists (*Brit. Birds* 87: 403) and, as a result, visited Bardsey Bird Observatory, Gwynedd, where 'we did sea-watching every day . . . there were mist-nets up everywhere . . . caught Garden Warblers, lots of Robins, Willow Warblers . . . went out to do some Manx Shearwater ringing in the dead of night . . . went out storm-petrelling . . . and the resident wildlife artist, Kim Atkinson, helped me with my artwork. I hope I can go back to Bardsey Island . . .'.
*STOP PRESS . . . and a winner this year: see pages 603-604.

All-dark petrels

Following his request for records of all-dark petrels (*Brit. Birds* 87: 25), S. J. Morrison received many letters describing storm-petrels and petrels with all-dark rumps. There are a few outstanding records for which Steve still seeks details:

- 1988 SEA AREA SOLE c.30 miles southwest of Scilly from MV *Chalice*, 3rd August (only one description received; are there any more and are there any photographs?).
- 1989 HUMBERSIDE Stone Creek, 9th September.
Schiermonnikoog, Netherlands, 8th October.
HUMBERSIDE Hornsea, 22nd November.
- 1990 DORSET Chesil Cove/Ferrybridge, 14th May (possibly also on 15th, 28th and 29th May).
NORFOLK Cley, 25th September.
- 1991 SEA AREA SOLE c.25 miles southwest of Scilly from MV *Scillonian*, 18th August (two descriptions received; are there any more?).
HUMBERSIDE Hornsea, 8th September.
GWYNEDD Porth Colmon, 24th September.
- 1993 SEA AREA SOLE from MV *Scillonian*, 15th August.

There are also hearsay records of all-dark petrels seen at other sites, such as at Newquay, Cornwall, in 1988, but exact details are not forthcoming. Steve would welcome descriptions of these and of any of the reports listed above. All correspondence will be very much appreciated and acknowledged. Please write to S. J. Morrison, c/o 9 Holt Road, Branksome, Poole, Dorset BH12 1JQ.

Max's birthday surprise



181. At his 90th birthday party, at The Atheneum in Pall Mall, London, on 12th July 1994, E. M. Nicholson receives from Professor C. M. Perrins the first bound copy of vol. IX of *Birds of the Western Palearctic*, especially flown in from India, making Max the first person in the World to own a complete set of *BIIP* (Roland Kemp)

'Thank you BB', from BIY

The editors were delighted to receive this letter from 1994's Bird Illustrator of the Year, Ren Hathway: *

'I would like to say a big thank you for the BIY Reception—it was one of the most wonderful and eventful days I have ever had.

'Besides the superb exhibition of top-quality work, it was a great day for meeting so many people—in fact, I left after six hours wishing that I had had more time!

'I must admit that I was very proud to be the winner of this year's competition, and I owe a great deal to *British Birds* for this; I am now in a position to work freelance as a bird illustrator with the resulting commissions—something that I had long hoped to be able to do.'

Thank you, Ren. It makes us very pleased that our competition is appreciated, and that it not only provides superb *Kowa* telescopes for the winners, but also provides bird artists with the showcase that they need in order to achieve their ambitions.

New Recorders

Les Steward, 6 Creek View, Basildon, Essex SS16 4RH, has taken over from John Miller as Recorder for Essex.

Ian Lewington, 119 Brasenose Drive, Didcot, Oxon OX11 7BP, has taken over from John Brucker as Recorder for Oxfordshire.

Birds and Set-aside

There are many problems facing agriculture in the UK today, as our numerous farming friends are quick to tell us. Here are just two (greatly simplified).

First, there is an overproduction of food-stuffs—the result of changing agricultural practices, including intensification. Secondly, there is a reduction in the populations of seed-eating birds that live on farmland—also the result of changing agricultural practices. In an attempt to address the former, the set-aside system was introduced, whereby payments are made to take land out of production. Not universally liked, and with the rules and regulations still in need of refinement, the set-aside fields have appeared on the landscape, particularly in the highly arable south and east of England. The decline in certain farmland bird species was identified via the regular population-monitoring undertaken by the BTO's network of volunteer birdwatchers. In

recent years, Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis* have declined by 5.4%, Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* by 56%, Greenfinches *C. chloris* by 6% and Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella* by 5%. Equally striking declines have been recorded for Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus* and Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra*.

In the winters of 1992/93 and 1993/94, bird counts were undertaken on 40 farms in Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk to ascertain just what use these declining species were making of the new set-aside fields. In East Anglia, 50% or more of Sky Larks, Greenfinches, Linnets and Yellowhammers were found on set-aside when compared with stubbles, cereals, ploughed and grass fields; while similarly, in Devon, these four plus a further seven species were found more frequently on the set-aside. Further details from Andy Evans, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Portuguese migrants

Gonçalo Elias and Luis Rcino are collecting information on the dates of arrival and departure of summer migrants in Portugal (in particular the dates of the first and last individuals), in order to define the limits of the migration periods for each species. They particularly seek information on the following:

(1) Any records of summer migrants in November, December, January or February (except White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*, Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Hoopoe *Upupa epops* and Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, which overwinter regularly in the southern half of Portugal).

(2) Any records of Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*, Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* and Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, except in June and the first half of July.

(3) Any spring records of Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* or Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*.

(4) Any records of Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* or Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* after 15th July.

(5) Any records of Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* or Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* before 31st March or after 1st August.

It is not possible to list all required information here in detail, so anybody who has details of observations of summer migrants in Portugal is invited to write for further details about the dates of interest for each of the 62 individual species. Please write to Gonçalo Elias & Luis Rcino, Rua dos Baldaques, 62, 2-ID, 1900 Lisboa, Portugal.

'Flight' of fancy?

An anxious visitor to Northumberland towards the end of July asked whether she was too late to see the penguins on the Farne Islands. One of us (WD) was able to assure her that she had plenty of time as 'They haven't arrived up here yet!'

New Scottish Rare Man

In the same way as with the British Birds Rarities Committee, one member of the Scottish Birds Records Committee retires each year, and there is an annual democratic election (by SOC local recorders) if there is more than one nomination for the vacancy.

This year, Bernard Zonfrillo stands down, and the new member is David Clugston, ex-Wirral but long-time Paisley resident.

Funds for conservation projects

BirdLife International and the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society, with support from British Petroleum, hold an annual competition for conservation exploration projects. Projects entering the competition are judged especially on the level of host-country involvement and the global importance of the conservation issues on which the project is focused. Proposals for 1995 expeditions must be entered no later than 31st December 1994.

For further information contact Michael K. Poulsen, BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA; phone Cambridge (01223) 277318; Fax (01223) 277200.

A fishy tale

Mike Jones (Tarporey, Cheshire) and Peter Brown (Brighton, East Sussex) have drawn our attention to the following extract from *The Guardian* of 6th September 1994: 'The red kite and the fish-tailed eagle have been saved from the brink . . .'

'Bird Watching' highlights

The December issue of the monthly magazine *Bird Watching* includes a photo-feature on birds in flight; the best sites to see winter Red Knots *Calidris canutus*; a visit to Dawlish Warren Reserve in Devon; the highs and lows of birding in 1994; a 24-page UK Bird Sightings supplement; and the second part of the comprehensive travel supplement.

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Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

John Wilson—Northwest



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 16th October to 13th November 1994

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus* At least 100 in second half of October, mostly on East Coast.

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* Fair Isle (Shetland), 5th-6th November.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* St David's (Dyfed), 30th October; near Larne (Co. Antrim), on 31st October, died in care (first for Northern Ireland).

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* At least 13, including two, Clumber Park (Nottinghamshire).

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewski* Landguard (Suffolk), identified on 6th November, but present earlier, killed by Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus* on 10th.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* Great Yarmouth (Norfolk), 1st-20th October; Landguard Point, 26th October; and in Leicestershire, 3rd November.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* Chipping Ongar (Essex), 28th October, taken into care.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius* St Kilda (Western Isles), 31st October; Felixstowe (Suffolk), 2nd November, dead.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* At least 70 in second half of October (40 during 19th-22nd), influx continuing into November, with 25 on 4th; best-ever autumn in Ireland, with six.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* Mizen Head (Co. Cork), from 8th-11th October.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* Ramsey Island (Dyfed), 31st October to 4th November.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* Sanday (Orkney), 22nd October; Out Skerries (Shetland), 22nd-23rd October; Sumburgh (Shetland), 23rd October; North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 28th October; Fair Isle, 7th November.

Yellow-browed Bunting *E. chrysophrys* St Agnes (Scilly), 19th-22nd October.



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Corrections

VOLUME 81

543 RARE BIRDS IN GREAT BRITAIN IN 1987. Little Egret in Dorset in November, observer was B. Minshull (not B. Minhull).

VOLUME 86

504 RARE BIRDS IN GREAT BRITAIN IN 1992. Olive-backed Pipit in Shetland on 4th October, first-named observer was B. Minshull (not R. Minshull).

VOLUME 87

31 BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR. For TS-601 read TS-611.

38 AGEING AND SEXING OF KING EIDERS. In caption to plate 15, for 'left' read 'right' and vice versa.

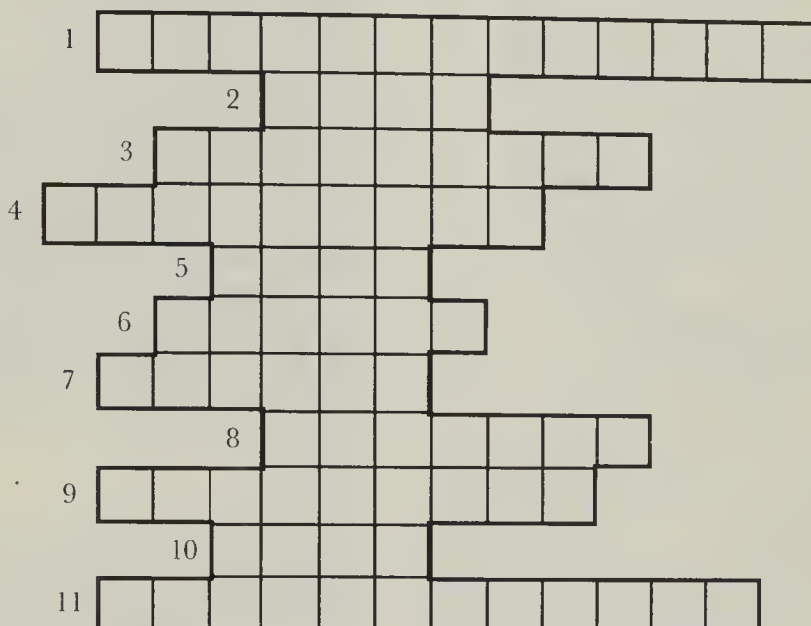
124 THE DECLINE OF THE CORN BUNTING. Fig. 6. Transpose legends on vertical and horizontal axes.

425 KING EIDERS IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND Line 34: for 'brown' read 'crown'.

455 THE ORNITHOLOGICAL YEAR 1993, Right-hand column, line 10: insert full point at end of sentence, after '27th'; new sentence starts 'October'.

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4. Bird that chuckles and deters would-be predators with droppings.
5. Old male called the pure female, when transposed gives cat-calls.
6. Britain and Ireland perhaps holds 8% of the World population of this hole-dwelling bird.
7. A sign of protection.
8. Starts off 400 times heavier than 2.
9. Bird found only just below 2,400 feet on Ben Lomond.
10. Bird that after being cornered will never move diagonally.
11. Shriek-owl, not an owl.

Answers fit into the spaces in the order listed from 1 to 11. All are English names of West Palearctic species.

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Front cover: Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* (*Robert Gillmor*); the original drawing of this month's cover design, measuring 12.5 × 13.8 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 32 in January issue for procedure)





